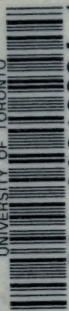


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO




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ANOTHER BOOK ON THE THEATRE

by

GEORGE
JEAN
NATHAN



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ANOTHER BOOK *on the* THEATRE

BY GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

ANOTHER BOOK
ON THE
THEATRE



NEW YORK

B. W. HUEBSCH

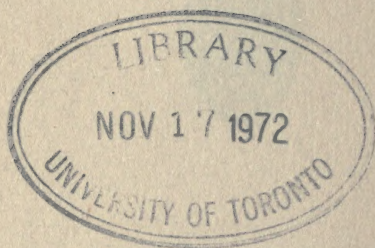
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BEING

A COLLECTION OF

*Haphazard, Fugitive and Some Might Say Impudent
Reflections in and on the Mirror which the
Theatre is Supposed to Hold Up to
Nature But with Which,
Instead, It More Often
Holds Up Its
Patrons.*

INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGY

THE ambition to become a dramatic critic assails probably nine city boy-children out of ten in that epoch which lies between their ambition to become President of the United States (an ambition rejected not later than the age of eleven by all better-class youngsters) and the somewhat loftier subsequent ambition to marry Gaby Deslys.

This ambition to grow up to be a professional remarker on the theatre is variously inculcated in youths. In the first place, they have at a very early age read the critical works of Mr. William Winter. A careful perusal of these standard critical works has convinced them that dramatic criticism is the pastime of taking luncheon with beautiful and prominent Shakespearean actresses. In the second place, they have read in the Sunday newspaper supplements many interviews by the dramatic critic of the paper in which that bored bird has recited the manner in which superb actresses have received him in their lacy *peignoirs*. And in the third place, they have caught sight, in the various strictly housekeeping, home and family journals for which their mother subscribes, of pictures of somebody with great big beautiful brown eyes named Marie Doro

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or something — and, blooie! their little minds are made up on the spot.

There is only one way in which parents may cure a child of this ambition to be a dramatic critic — and that way is quickly to take him to New York and make him go to the theatre twice in succession. If, after this, the child is still alive, and still interested in the theatre, his parents may prepare themselves for the worst. As dutiful parents it then becomes their duty no longer to stand in the way of their child's ambition and to give him the education necessary to the work he has chosen as his life's career. This education — essential to the popular and financial success of a modern dramatic critic — superimposes upon the aspirant a thorough understanding and appreciation of the following inviolable definitions and rules:

1. A dramatic criticism consists in so arranging the words and phrases, "technique," "nuance," "brilliant," "realism," "play of ideas," "commercial," "superficial," "egregious," "relentless," "atmosphere," "symbolism," "craftsmanship," "psychology," "Belasco, the Wizard," "dramatic unities of Aristotle," "talky," "types," "details," "unmoral rather than immoral," "the meaning is esoteric," "in the last analysis," "Shaw is insincere," "bourgeois," "piffle," "flapdoodle," "provincial," "personality," "cycle," "Molière," "sings through the nose," "*métier*," "the play of the century!", "sympathy," "heart interest," "genre

play," "as funny as Charley's Aunt," "the big scene reminds one of Mrs. Dane's Defense," and "'young' Mr. Edward Sheldon," that they shall deftly conceal the dramatic critic's impressive lack of ability to criticize drama.

2. "To review an author one must write a general essay on some more or less related theme or themes and, when one comes at last to one's man, use his play mainly to exhibit one's own powers of humor or satire."

3. Iterate with authoritative finality that Pinero is the greatest living British dramatist, Augustus Thomas the dean of American playwrights, Brieux a "mere *feuilletonist*" and Gordon Craig "an idealist whose practicability is seriously to be doubted" (proceeding then in the next sentence with a eulogy of Reinhardt).

4. Never, when the subject is in hand, let slip the opportunity to make a slightly disparaging allusion to: I. Sardou; II. Klaw and Erlanger; III. melodrama; IV. George M. Cohan; V. any playwright under thirty-five; VI. all dramatic critics other than yourself; VII. "distorted adaptations of foreign plays"; and VIII. exceptionally pretty young actresses (this latter will attest to your "dignity," "impersonal viewpoint," and non-confounding of good looks with the art of acting).

Of course, there are several other important rules, but I shall not disclose them all. Were I to do so, dramatic criticism would become an even

easier job than it now seems — and God knows! our children will need what college professors we still have left over as it is.

By this paragraph, you may be wondering why I, who am alleged by my friends and other enemies to be a dramatic critic, am here muckraking the profession. Let me defend myself. By every American definition of dramatic critic, by every American view of dramatic criticism which I have read or heard — and from a close study of dramatic criticism as it is largely practiced to-day in the land — I modestly, and not without regret, deny that I have any right or claim to the title which my plugging enemies have bequeathed upon me. I am *not* a dramatic critic. Let me prove it.

First, I believe that drama is *not* one thing and literature another. The two, I absurdly believe, may be, and from the soundest critical point of view *are*, on perfectly friendly terms. Second, I believe ridiculously that, in the main, acting is acting only in so far as it is ocularly reasonable and effective and that therefore, in many species of rôles, "types" are absolutely imperative. (Character acting I exclude inasmuch as character acting is not acting at all, but merely a slick knack for making-up.) If acting is not meant to be ocularly impressive, why the theatre? Why not sink on your spine in a melow chair and *read* the play? Am I not quite silly? I believe with what is almost a 42-centimeter imbecility that poor George Shaw is our most talented

living playwright; that the late Clyde Fitch was a laughably over-estimated fellow; that the late Stanley Houghton was another; that the Hungarians are writing the most imaginative plays of the hour; that Raymond Hitchcock is as adroit a *farceur* as Sacha Guitry; that Granville Barker is, in considerable measure, an artistic mountebank; that Arnold Daly is the best actor on the American stage; that Mrs. Fiske (as she faces us to-day) is one of anything but important position; that David Belasco has not thus far written one good play; that the German Lothar Schmidt knows human nature as not many modern light comedy writers know it; that Brieux's *Les Hanneçons* is one of the finest satires of our day and generation; that the acting at the Kleines Theatre in Berlin is the best acting in Europe or America; that musical comedy should be a frank appeal to and stimulant of the sex impulse and should aim to be nothing else; that there is no such thing as the mystery called dramatic technique — and a whole lot of other just such perfectly crazy things. Now do you believe me? I told you I wasn't a dramatic critic. And why, pray, should I be a dramatic critic? At least, a dramatic critic of the sort that is paid to review seriously and profoundly the theatre as we have it currently in the United States? I am a progressive. Our theatre, as you know, isn't. Why, therefore, should I go on indefinitely writing serious pieces about the very same things I wrote serious pieces about a dozen years ago?

The serious things of one generation are ever the comic things of the next. I feel I cannot go on being serious about what, once serious, has become sort o' funny. And, having thus become too flip-pantly light-hearted about the matter and having come to view it as more or less a joke, it follows that I can't be a dramatic critic even should I desire. To be a completely successful dramatic critic one must constantly see funny things from a serious viewpoint and serious things from a funny viewpoint. Some day, however, my present attitude may change. It usually does in a dramatic critic when he gets old. Which is why our old dramatic critics are held in such high esteem.

Meanwhile, I shall continue in my deplorable, supercilious and distinctly odious rut until our theatre progresses far enough along the avenue of originality to dare show us Maude Adams in a play in which Maude Adams is "ruined," a play in which John Drew ends unhappily, a play in which a character who shows symptoms of heart disease in the first act fails to die of it in the last, a play in which a seduced baggage does not sentimentally observe in narrating her sad tale that he had "tossed her aside like a broken flower," or a play in which the juvenile does not wear a black ribbon across his evening shirt and the ingénue some time or other run into the room carrying a bouquet of sweet peas.

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ANOTHER BOOK ON THE THEATRE

ANOTHER THEORY OF THE THEATRE

I

To be a successful argument in the American drama, an argument must be of such a quality that it coincides with the belief of nine-tenths of an American theatre audience — hence, an unsound argument.

II

To be regarded as a villain in the American drama, a character must be of such a nature that his opinions differ from the opinions of the hero, who has no opinions.¹

III

The ingénue in a play containing a woman “star” is a female character who is older and homelier than the “star” and who wears an unbecoming dress.²

¹ Hence the term “sympathetic,” applied to the hero.

² This is what is so often referred to as the star “system.”

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IV

In the American theatre, "the play's the thing" in the following proportion: 1. The "star." 2. The press-agent. 3. The scenery. 4. The lighting effects. 5. The modiste or tailor. 6. The play (provided the play is not a good play).

V

For a theme to be regarded as a new and sensational theme in the American drama, two things are essential: first, the theme must be an old theme; second, the theme must have no basis in fact.

VI

The heroes and villains in the American drama may be classified as follows:

<i>Heroes</i>	<i>Villains</i>
Bridge-builders	Bridge-players
Westerners	Easterners
Americans	Foreigners
Pipe-smokers	Cigarette-smokers
Paupers	Millionaires
Inventors	Lawyers
Crooks	Policemen
Brothers	Cousins

VII

The so-called "punch" in an American play is that part of the play that has been stolen from a play by Brieux.

VIII

The heroine in the play is the best-looking woman in the cast.

IX

A "play of New York Life" is any play that does not reflect New York life.

X

"Comedy relief"—relief from comedy.

XI

[The star system — a substitute for acting.

XII

Acting — a substitute for drama.

XIII

Drama — a substitute for moving-pictures.

A PROTEST FOR VULGARITY

THE difference twixt a *risqué* American farce and a *risqué* French farce is simply this: in the former the plot proceeds *toward* adultery, in the latter the plot proceeds *from* adultery. Or, in another phrasing, the American product deals with adultery as a probability of the immediate future, while the Gallic product deals with the probability of adultery of the immediate past being found out.

[The merciless, almost frantic, circumspection exercised by authors and adaptors of so-called *risqué* American farces to prevent a realization of this potential adultery — a whitewashing process that has been going on longer than the oldest amongst us can remember — has now arrived at the point where the average *risqué* home-done boudoir affair is about as *risqué* as a bed in a hospital.

By nature and training a prude and Puritan, I protest to the fullest force of invective against this foul and nauseous practice of our farce writers. I object to this salamandering school of farce that has barnacled itself to the name American, this teaser academy of *pseudo-risqué* writing. It disgusts me, goes against the stomach. Here a legitimate field for the incursion of a Mr. Anthony Comstock. Were I in some such gentleman's place, I

should have such farces off the boards, I may tell you, in quick order. Had I my way, there would be no farce of the class discussed permitted on the American stage. Not one! I should insist, and to my aid should invoke the law, that the present laboriously suggestive bed-badgering pieces — pieces that impress one as a sex alumna affecting baby-eyes and baby-talk further to sentimentalize a college boy — be chased out of the playhouse. And I should insist, and should summon the law to insist with me, that in the stead of such pornographic innuendo, such lewd signalings behind the back, we be given good, straight-forward, clean, wholesome, healthy *risqué* farce in which adultery, instead of being, as now, nastily jockeyed with and titillatingly deferred, should figure as a realized fact.

Although Mr. John Palmer is a bit too Britishly timid in the full admitting of it, I agree completely with him that, in dealing comically with sex, the Grangousian way is certainly the best way — that sex is a perennially gross accident and necessity of the flesh — the capital instance of our damnation as immortal spirits compelled to utter ourselves grotesquely in blood and bone, but finding in that damnation a way of laughter whereby to accept it. "This," says J. P., "is the comic way of all that broad, intimate comedy of life which now is no longer printed, but lingers still in every house where men and women live with the barriers down; lingers too in every boudoir and smoke-room where

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women or men find severally their honest fun. Such treatment of sex peeps furtively out of our comedy; but our authors are too much afraid of it to turn it to any fruitful purpose." "Falstaff," continues he, "no longer treads the English stage save as an historic ghost; and it is at present useless attempting to recover him. Someday, perhaps, when the theatre once more believes too fervently in the souls of men to be afraid of their bodies, Falstaff will come back to us, speaking the language of a new century. For the present, universal vulgar comedy is extinct."

The chief objection to our so-called *risqué* American sex farces is their lack of vulgarity. Of course, they are in the main sufficiently ill-mannered to pass as comedies of manners with our first-night audiences, and they are, in general, sufficiently gross in their cheapness of wit, humor and intelligence to appeal strongly to such audiences as witty, humorous and intelligent, but their deficiency in the matter of fine, open-hearted, full-throated vulgarity remains markedly offensive and repugnant to ladies and gentlemen. [To be delicately *risqué* is an absurdly easy task; but to succeed in being downright and originally vulgar is a job only for crack shots. If you doubt me, try it for yourself. Unless I am mistaken, I imagine you will discover that your attempts at original abject vulgarity are very pitiful affairs — having the air of nothing better than such attempts as might be ventured by garbage-removers, trapeze performers

or clever conversationalists. To be genuinely, artistically vulgar requires an education, a soundly trained mind, good breeding, social background. Find a completely satisfying vulgar person and you will find simultaneously an artist. But the Walt Whitmans and Richard Wagners, alas, are few and far between.

On the other hand, as I have remarked above, almost any one may be adept at the delicately *risqué*. As a matter of record, I cannot at the moment think of a person of my acquaintance — man or woman — who is not more or less a whip-hand at the business. The idea that when Oscar Wilde died the knack of the tactfully *risqué* died with him, is as preposterous as it is popular. Compare, for instance, any line of Wilde's you choose with one of my friends' "There can be no peace of mind for the old man who has taken for wife a young woman: he must ever be jealous of the man she should have married." Even some of our American playwrights are handy at the thing! Consider, against any line of Wilde's, for example, Mr. Hurlbut's "When a man encounters a woman in a mood he doesn't understand, he desires to know if she is tired." (From *The Strange Woman*.)

The very fact that Wilde has had countless imitators and Rabelais none (or exceeding few) proves, in a measure, the contention that complete, convincing vulgarity is ten thousand times as difficult of accomplishment as the nicely suggestive. For a mil-

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lion men like myself who can write such smartly *risqué*, but thoroughly childish, things as "The Empress Josephine — caviare to the General," and "Girls' boarding school — an institution of yearning" (I can turn 'em out, when engrossingly alcoholized, by the yard), there is born but one fine old vulgar Wycherley with his fine old vulgar Mr. Horner. Shaw has tried his very damndest to be vulgar — and has regularly failed. So has Wedekind. So Brieux. So, save for one fleeting moment, Echégaray. There is, so far as I know, only one piece of dramatic literature in Europe to-day which in any sense may be said to approach, however remotely, to handsome, soothing, compelling, admirable vulgarity, and that one piece is the *Reigen* of Arthur Schnitzler. Whenever you hear a critic get red in the typewriter over the "vulgarity" of a theatrical presentation you may make up your mind that the critic in question confuses vulgarity with common stupidity. And, as I have proved to you, the two cannot and do not go together — ever. That is, vulgarity cannot be negotiated whether in literature or stage buffoonery or what not save by intelligence and skill. Mr. George Robey, the most vulgar comic actor on the British stage, has been eulogized in one of the most dignified of the British critical journals of arts and letters for the purely intellectual quality of his vulgarity. Mr. Ade's fables in slang are at once vulgar and genuine works of literary art because their author is an intellectual surveyor of the

human comedy, a shrewd student of places, peoples, manners. Where, to turn to our more serious American stage stuffs, more thorough art than in the crass vulgarity of much of Mr. Walter's Easiest Way?

I repeat: What our comic stage needs more than anything else is vulgarity. Not vulgarity as vulgarity is commonly translated by our critics — vulgarity of diagonally hung waistcoat watchchains, of Broadway slang, of file-voiced, overdressed actors, of cheap and tawdry smut — but the incandescent vulgarity that reveals and depicts human nature at its truest. This latter vulgarity is the sort of vulgarity so excellently accomplished by Mr. Knoblauch in that scene of his Faun wherein the Faun invites the haughty lady out into the garden, a scene unfortunately edited to some considerable extent; I have heard, before it was given to the delicate local public. This latter vulgarity is the species of vulgarity so adroitly managed in Toby Belch. It may take many forms, many movements — but if it be honest vulgarity and sincere, it is not to be mistaken for the kind of vulgarity with which Broadway currently confounds it. The stubborn foe that vulgarity must contend with is, of course, hypocrisy. The hypocrisy of second-rate members of second-rate society who are forced to pose the pretenses of a café type of civilization and culture. When that day comes when our theatre will draw again its audiences from the ladies and gentlemen of the

commonwealth, instead of as present from the cerebral and social clowns of stuccoed grillrooms, Danses de This or That and similar rendezvous of the metropolitan social fractions, then and only then may our theatre safely devote itself to the frankly, completely and magnificently vulgar in its comic drama.

Let us cast an eye upon three farces of the so-called *risqué* class which have been visited upon the community. First, Apartment 12K, the job of a Mr. Lawrence Rising. By virtue of the circumstance that the piece disclosed a bed to the audience, to say nothing of a man in pajamas and one-not-his-wife in night clothes, the play reviewers pronounced the procedure, as is the custom in such cases, vulgar. This, however, was precisely the fault of the farce. It was not vulgar. Common and cheap, yes; but vulgar, no. Not once from curtain rise to curtain fall were the characters made or allowed to act according to the natures of human beings. Not once when did their prototypes in the actual world of humans subconsciously demand that innate vulgarity pop out its rebellious but lovely bean, did Rising's characters hear. The result? A good vulgar atmosphere spoiled by injecting into it timid characters afraid of that atmosphere. As well try in a piece of straight dramatic writing to work out the "Hindle Wakes" case of a Fanny Hawthorne with a virgin. What ho! Laura Murdock a member of the Y. W. C. A., Iris Bellamy a subscriber to The

Ladies' Home Journal and Zoe Blundell a sock-mender!

No, if the writer takes, in farce, a vulgar cyclo-rama he must people it with pertinently vulgar persons. Otherwise, instead of deriving sound farce from the materials in hand, the residue will be neither flesh nor foul, neither human nor humanly vulgar, but merely a hypocritical potpourri of affected and tedious social conventionalities.

But Mr. Rising, it would appear from the two plays of his workmanship which I have been invited professionally to witness, is still too greatly the amateur of letters, life and humor to hope to write happily vulgar farce. The barest mechanics of writing are still evidently not within his knowledge. He should, therefore, turn his attention to the writing of successful novels. (Or magazine short stories "intended for the home.") As to humor, this gentleman's arsenal of wit seems principally to contain the standard uncomplimentary jokes about New York. P. P. Howe has observed that you may always spot a young writer by his fondness for mentioning by name in his writings rare wines and sauces. One may similarly always spot the amateur playwright by his predilection for cracking cynical jokes about New York. When the playwright grows up in his work, he learns that New York is of itself too much the cynical joke to be the butt of a reciprocal humor; and, having once learned this, he proceeds to crack cynical jokes about Phila-

delphia. And after a couple of years elapse and he gains a famous reputation, he is duly honored with election to the Society of American Dramatists, an election which permits him once a year to make a speech eulogizing the American drama and closing with an explosion of beautiful rhetorical fireworks in honor of Klaw and Erlanger, to whom he hopes to sell his next play.

[The Third Party is of the college of adapted foreign *risqué* farce and, while happily more vulgar than its predecessor, exhibits still an undue and vastly regrettable restraint which scours the entertainment of the bulk of its possible humors. Where, however, in Apartment 12K the leading figures of the show, moving about the bed checkerboard, were made to persist unnaturally in a morality at once so dainty and so disgusting, so theoretically orthodox and so unsavory, there is at least one figure in this second sex-loto who, for something like fifteen minutes, has been permitted by the authors to view his joint occupation of a boudoir with a pretty young woman without the ethical alarm held to be necessary in the Anglo-Saxon theatre. The unreserved vulgarity of the fellow, a vulgarity of course presently toned down and moralized to ease the shock of the Broadway vestals, is quite captivating in this hour of melancholy farcical sex cant and humorless, unseasoned quackery. Beyond these fifteen minutes of intelligent fun, the farce resigns itself to customary confection of old *roué*, fair young (adapted)]

virgin, overturned screen disclosing twain to wife, prevarications, motionings behind wife's back, stampings on neighbor's foot, squirting seltzer siphons, *et cetera*. The supposed resistance piece of the show, as I have already hinted, is the standard climacteric scene wherein a man and woman, not wedded but supposed by the other characters to be man and wife, are assigned to the same sleeping chamber. In one form or another, more or less precise, this situation is always with us. In different masks it has peeped out of any number of French farces, out of such native products as Little Miss Brown, An American Widow, Nobody's Widow and the like, out of The Beautiful Adventure (to name a French play not a farce), out of German farcical comedy, out of the transoceanic musical gambol. In its Anglo-Saxon mask, the situation is, as I have observed, generally reduced to a condition of laughless ineffectuality through the same yap *morale* which has adapted Gulliver's Travels into a kindergarten tale, ripped out George Moore's appendix with a blue pencil, and raised the price of Burton's Arabian Nights to \$98.50.

For a correction of our local farce conditions, conditions which have made our home-made comic pieces fit only for the audition and contemplation of tots in arms and old maids, I look in good measure to Miss Margaret Mayo. Here a lady who is energetically vulgar, humanly vulgar. Her Baby Mine was the funniest American farce because, of

all, it was the vulgarest. Two of her financially unsuccessful attempts at serious dramatic writing — one was called *Behind the Scenes*; I forgot the title of the other, having a knowledge of the play only from the fragmentary reports of my Pacific Coast patrol (the piece was done briefly out there) — were frank and sincere studies of the genus young girl as she is in contemporary native life and probably may account their failure to this frankly vulgar, admirably vulgar and consequently honest attitude. The artist in vulgarity has against him ever the allied forces of sentimental ignorance.

Miss Mayo's most recent adventure with the footlights takes the form of a dramatization of Mr. E. S. Field's short fiction, *Twin Beds*. Although in no manner comparable with *Baby Mine*, which it apparently was designed to parallel, the farce has sufficient of the characteristic Mayo touch to render the ear politely hospitable to it. There are numerous tedious spaces in the piece where the playwright has become a bit afraid of too much vulgarity and has "refined" the action, but these droughts find their relief in pleasurable *contra bonos mores* moments wherein several beings, male and female, undress in public, get into one another's beds, roll around on the floor with the whisky rabies, discourse of the marital relations and vie briefly with the Don Juan of Echegaray, whose palate was touched at dawn by the stray lock of the Tarifena's

hair, in an allusion to a somewhat similar phenomenon.

As I have suggested, Miss Mayo is ever happiest in her handling of vulgar situations. To this deft talent she owes her considerable and legitimate success in the theatre. Where other native playwrights seek to tone down such situations and episodes, Miss Mayo tones them up. She is ever delightfully dirty. Whether or not this is a conscious play-writing activity of the lady's, I am unable, of course, to say. Probably, indeed, she does not mean her episodes to be so; probably she strives in her studio to make them the reverse. But, conscious or not conscious, Miss Mayo's farce humor is vastly above the farce humor of the majority of her native rivals because it is basically natural, human and hence, ribald. Not smutty, mind this! There is a spacious chasm between smut and vulgarity of the sort which we are treating. Such vulgarity is of natural, smut of unnatural, birth. The former makes for the honest fun, the brotherly fun, of barrooms; the latter for the effeminate, mincing giggle of pink boudoirs. There is in vulgarity the true philosophy, the true biography of man as he is born; smut is the fiction side. Thus, only "refined" people are smutty.

WHEN GREEK MEETS GRANVILLE

I AM disposed to regard outdoor drama as of a kidney with indoor baseball. That such dubious things have existed and do exist I stand, if surprised from the rear, ready to admit; but else, though the antiquarian evangelists of both forms of *bizarrerie* marshal a magnum of facts against me, I affirm I shall to my dying day stoutly deny the probability of any such existence.

Fresh from a vision of the benevolent Mr. Granville Barker's dramatic Fresh Air Fund in the divers university stadia, I am inspired to record the impression that it seems as logical and "educational" to play Euripides out-of-doors (merely because Euripides was originally played thus) as it would be to compel students to glimpse the Homeric epics off goat-skin merely because they were originally transcribed upon goat-skin. The entire business is still another illuminating commentary first, on the extravagant and transparent tomfooleries with which this Mr. Barker has been fetching the impressible American public (Mr. Barker was sharp enough to produce both *Iphigenia* and *The Trojan Women indoors* in his less buncombe-swallowing London); second, on the inappropriateness and comic futility of *al fresco* drama as a whole; and

third and finally, on that class of persons which accepts any such slaughter of Greek drama as a post-impressionist Roman holiday.

[That the ancient Greeks gave matinées of Euripides, when they gave them at all, only on cloudy days, days when the heavens were sad and sullen, and that their best effect with his dramas was, after all, achieved by night with the glaring fringe of torches, should in some measure cool the whoopings of the professors for these modern Greek daylight shows.

That the drama, of whatever sort, cannot endure in the sun is, of course, a fact already deeply appreciated. The test of all art is the light of day. The drama cannot stand the light of day. Hence the drama is not an art. Beethoven's effect is as positive in the open Prater at high noon as in the darkened Hofoperntheatre by night. Velasquez's Adoration of the Shepherds, with the hard light streaming in upon it through the windows of the National Gallery of London, produces its mood as positively, as genuinely, as when, later, the great hall darkens and the soft flow of electricity falls more gently upon it. Michelangelo's marble David of the Signoria, by sun or by moon, is the same. These are in the corral of art. *Now, imagine Rosmersholm around ten o'clock some morning at Coney Island!*

[The drama, in so far as its written self is concerned, is of course another — and a finer — thing.

But as for acted drama, acted drama is to written drama as a talkative woman is to a subdued and wistful one.

The acted drama prospers in proportion to the artificiality and unreality of its immediate surroundings. Hence, to essay a projection of acted drama on a dazzling football gridiron with, across the tops of the bleachers, a prospect of innumerable Olus Underwear and Campbell's Soup advertisements bewitching the eyeball, is to essay a task at once asquint and impeachable. Such extramural impresarios as Mr. Ben Greet and the Coburn players, accepting the outdoor performance at its one and only true value, to wit, as a means for diddling money out of good-natured, culture-currying yokels, are sufficiently slick generally to give their performances in groves. These groves not only tend to soften the searching light which otherwise would make of tragedy's cloak a motley, but also in the audience's eye so mix up the actors with the trees that the audience is led subtly to imagine the actors are less wooden than they are.

Mr. Barker approaches the Greek drama as he approaches Shakespeare. Not as one who admires and respects and appreciates a noble dramatic text, but as a saucy college-boy who elects a course in the classics solely for the familiar opportunity it will afford him to put impudent questions to his tutor. What the milk bath was to Anna Held and the left hook to the Poillon sisters, the Greek drama and

Shakespeare are to Barker. In his work with the classics, he occupies the same relation to an artist that Sarah Bernhardt's artificial leg occupies to histrionic talent. Unfortunately, there are few who choose to discriminate in the matter of such ratios and so we have the spectacle of Barker's canonization in much the same way that we currently enjoy a stunning and hysterical discharge of critical nougat over the French actress, not, mind you, because she is an actress and an artist of possibly high rank, but because she is an actress and an artist with only one leg!

It has been said of Mr. Barker — and in considerable part the statement is true — that he enjoys a perfectly open mind so far as the drama and the theatre are concerned. The leading difficulty with Mr. Barker's mind, however, would seem to be that it is so darned open that every wild, crazy theatrical idea gets into it. And, once in, squats. As a consequence, he presents us in his treatment of the classic drama with a mixture of Bakst, Reinhardt, the Butterick Patterns, May Manton, Gordon Craig and the Nonpareil Wall-Paper Company. His production of *Iphigenia in Tauris* in the Yale Bowl, with its procession of grotesque costumes by one Wilkinson, accordingly reminded the spectators of nothing quite so much as a five-year reunion parade of the class of 1910. Certainly, if it be a legitimate enterprise to "sell" Greek drama by such controvertible means, so were it then a nobby

bit of trade likewise to create a stir among the book-agents by getting out a new edition of the Bible with a Penrhyn Stanlaws cover and a jacket containing the reprint of a favorable criticism by Jeanette Gilder.

That it is the local tradition habitually to mistake novelties for ideas is of course a circumstance intimately appreciated. Thus the native slang, "I've got a great idea for a play," when translated, is found generally to mean that the enthusiastic individual has merely given birth to some such superficially fresh but equally immaterial notion as a play the scene of one whose acts is laid in a Turkish bath. It is undoubtedly to the well-nigh unanimous American acceptance of this theory that Mr. Barker has attained to eminence in our community — and to some extent, in his own. But, even now, I catch symptoms of a coming-to, a where-am-I, an awakening, on the part of our populace. True, by many of the daily journalists the gentleman is still regarded with the awe that is ever born of puzzlement, the veneration that flourishes always in this country for the dealer in the latest spectacular quackery, the doler out of the latest persuasive physic, the vender of the most recent bolus; and true, we encounter still such intermezzi as those composed by one Harrison Smith in *The Bookman* in the general pitch of "inspiration," "genius" and the like — but, as I say, even so there are already straws which begin to show that Mr. Barker

will shortly take his place in the pew of *passé* American fads along with the white slave, Phyllis Neilson-Terry, the Kneipp Cure, the Belasco details, Friedmann's tuberculosis cure, the Princess Theatre as an American Guignol and Antoine, Schlatterism, flannel stomach bands, hair-growing tonics, Bergson, September Morn, the girls in the Florodora sextette, umbilicular contemplation, the idea that George Bernard Shaw spoke only paradoxes, witchcraft, the divining rod, Elsie Siegel, Thomas W. Lawson, the monarchical abduction of Gaby Deslys, the efficacy of rubber shoes in wet weather, the bustle, Dowie, the Mann Act, free silver, malicious animal magnetism, mental healing, physicians, patent pocket cigar lighters, advanced coffees, the theory that personality was one thing and effective histrionism another, the power of suggestion, French drama, table-tapping, root beer, Arnold Bennett's genius, Mrs. Fiske, Stanley Houghton, psychological phenomena (chiefly, dual personality), sex hygiene, eugenics, the brutality of football, "The Turtle," antivivisection, the buildings at the Philadelphia Centennial, the wickedness of the hoochee-koochee, Esperanto, cubist art, futurist art, Maeterlinck's symbolism, the Montessori method, the British battleship *Audacious* and Anna Held's eyes, the segregation of vice, the bicycle, Maxine Elliott's beauty, the Katzenjammer Kids, [Three Weeks, Home-run Baker, Isadora Duncan, the belief that every time you crossed the Channel you were sure

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to be seasick, the maxixe, the phaeton, men's hair cut round at the back, Frankie Bailey's limbs, suspenders and the single standard of sex, the animal and geographical discoveries in the wilderness by Theodore Roosevelt, Richard Mansfield's temperament, the freak clothes worn by Eleanora Sears, the New York Herald, Damaged Goods and the pure uncommercial purpose of Richard Bennett, the superiority of Franz Lehar to Victor Herbert, the philosophies of Andrew Carnegie, Bonnie McGinn, gray ties and waistcoats with dinner jackets, advanced vaudeville and Billy Sunday.

FIGLEAVES FROM THE BOOK OF MUSICAL COMEDY

THERE is, in America, a group of men containing such familiar programme names as Ned Wayburn, R. H. Burnside, Julian Mitchell, George Marion, Ben Teal, Fred Latham and the like, a group which achieves a more or less secure livelihood through massaging musical shows into proper shape for public presentation. [These men refer to themselves and are referred to customarily not as stage producers of musical comedies, but as musical comedy stage producers. The difference wherein may at first glance elude the eyeball. But there is a difference — and a stout one, at least to those who are in the know as to what I am compelled, for sufficiently illuminating designation, to name the technique of the business.

The difference is this: these men do not produce musical comedies (plural). They produce musical comedy (singular). In another phrasing, they may produce any number of such shows apiece, but, basically, every one of these shows follows more or less closely a ritual so precise that almost all music shows may be accurately narrowed down to one definite type. They are, therefore, are these producers, producers not of many musical comedies but of *one* musical comedy.

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My business here is to prove this to you — and to them.

In musical comedy as we get it currently in our theatres — and as it has been given us for many years — there are, for example, sixty certain allusions and points in the dialogue (we shall discuss the dialogue presently) which a song is publicly expected to follow and which consequently *must* follow. This fact has given birth to a so-called musical comedy producer catalogue of song cues, as the points in the dialogue are called. The producers are bound to introduce a song at such points, irrespective of the original form, intent and purpose of the manuscript. These songs — which may be defined as a combination of tonsil and nose sounds originally set and subsequently upset to a combination of violin and French horn or bass drum and trombone sounds — inevitably follow upon these sixty spoken words and allusions:

I. "Listen and I'll tell you."

II. "Oh, my moon — how wonderful you are to-night!"

III. "How *much* do you love me?"

IV. "What is that I hear?" "It's the whippoorwills a-callin'."

V. "Yes, but there's only one girl in the world for me!"

VI. "Yes, but there's only one town in the world for me!"

VII. "Yes, but there's only one street in the world for me!"

VIII. "Ah love! What a wonderful thing is love!"

IX. Any allusion to a rose.

X. Any allusion to ale.

XI. "It seems to me only yesterday."

XII. "Do you remember that waltz we heard on that wonderful moonlit night in Florence?"

XIII. "Wine! What a comrade in times of despair and sorrow!"

XIV. Any allusion to the stars.

XV. "She is my dream girl."

XVI. "Through the smoke of my pipe I can see —"

XVII. Any allusion to a levee.

XVIII. Any allusion to the Mississippi River.

XIX. Any allusion to the State of Tennessee.

XX. "She comes! The Princess comes!"

XXI. "Those were the good old days — Youth and Spring and the highroad!"

XXII. Any allusion to gypsies, particularly a gypsy girl.

XXIII. "Why, to be sure I've loved other girls; but somehow they weren't like you. For you're —"

XXIV. Any allusion to Arcady.

XXV. "The girlies: how I love them all!"

XXVI. "Give *me* a *soldier's* life!!"

XXVII. "Give *me* a *sailor's* life!!"

XXVIII. "There's nothing to me like the music of the band!"

XXIX. Any allusion to the month of June.

XXX. "Just you and me, dear — what a wonderful honeymoon it'll be."

XXXI. "Well, we can't do without the girlies!"

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XXXII. "A toast! A toast!"

XXXIII. "Oh, for the days when I was twenty-one and you were sweet sixteen!"

XXXIV. Any allusion to a "garden of dreams."

XXXV. Any allusion to Dixie.

XXXVI. "It's different when the *right* one comes along."

XXXVII. Any allusion to any white girl named Mary.

XXXVIII. Any allusion to any colored girl named Mandy.

XXXIX. "I think I'm falling in love."

XL. Any allusion to "childhood days."

XLI. "But love — love *never* dies!"

XLII. "True love lives but in our dreams."

XLIII. Any allusion to "gay Paree."

XLIV. "If I were the man in the moon."

XLV. "I'm awfully lonesome for a certain girl and — can you guess, dear? — that certain girl is you."

XLVI. "Remember the words of the wise old owl."

XLVII. Any allusion to the golden sunset fading beyond the hills.

XLVIII. "I wonder how many girls you've told that to."

XLIX. Any allusion (on a darkened stage) to "dream-land."

L. "Yes, but there's another I'm thinking of — *my mother*."

LI. "Because —"

LII. "Ah something (girl, man, boyhood home, native land, etc.), forever I call to thee."

LIIL. "Then it's farewell forever."

LIV. "Hail!" (It matters not in the least to whom.)

LV. Any allusion to Mrs. Grundy. (Always a comic song.)

LVI. "That's art." (See LV.)

LVII. "What you want and what you get are not always the same thing, remember."

LVIII. "Come, let's go to (the ball, St. George's, rag-time jubilee, or what not)."

LIX. Any allusion to wedding bells.

LX. 11 P. M. (imperative).

Thus is the *introduction* of songs into musical comedy definitely and rigorously tabulated. Now for the songs themselves. First, a consideration of the lyric, or words of the song. A musical comedy lyric, to be satisfactory, must read as well and as intelligibly backwards as forwards. In this wise is the popularity of the lyric to a considerable degree insured, inasmuch as the mind of the music show patron is such that he remembers the lyric backwards rather than forwards. This, at first, may sound a trifle ridiculous; but you may experiment upon yourself to test the probity of the thing. Pick up a sheet of music and read the lyric of the chorus aloud in the tempo in which it is likely to be sung from the stage. Then put the printed sheet aside and endeavor to recall the words. Is it not rather obvious and natural that you will recall the last words you read (or, in the theatre, heard) more readily than the first? Take such a particularly popular ragtime lyric as, let us say, *The Gaby Glide*. Contemplate it backwards!

Verse

It's a heavenly trip, it's a big joyful dip,
 Can you stop? I guess "no,"
 For you travel so, with a lot of go!
 You feel all the joys of life in one single minute,
 Talk about your other rags, why they aren't in it —
 Floating in the air, you are here and there,
 We can't stop our feet at all, they feel such an itching,
 We are going crazy 'bout this new dance bewitching.

Chorus

Oh! Oh! That Gaby, Gaby glide,
 Do the forward dip and see how you begin to sway,
 Do the side step, trip and then go back the other way —
 Don't lag or let your feelings hide,
 Oh! Oh! That Gaby glide,
 Swing up near, then wide,
 Do the Paris ride,
 Start in to the side;
 Dance it here and dance it there and keep on dancing hard,
 Prance along as though you were upon the boulevard,—
 It's just a real Parisian slide,
 Oh! Oh! That Gaby, Gaby glide.

Try the reversed process on any such lyric you may happen at the moment to have in mind, and you will discover for yourself the truth of the trick. This is an established rule of the musical comedy lyric. [Take, as another example, a lyric other than one joined to a ragtime melody. Some such lyric, for illustration, as the following from *Fantana*, one

that, at first thought, might seem to reverse itself less clearly than a more naturally jumbled, syncopated lyric of The Gaby Glide quality:

Chorus

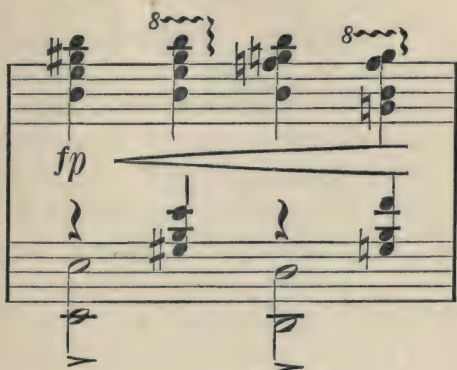
Save one kiss for me,
 Look no further, I'm your man,
 Like this one on the fan
 Is your tiny face of tan
 Listen to my plea
 Black-eyed maid of eastern skies
 Sitting taking tea,
 Laughing little almond eyes!

To convince yourself finally, experiment with such a spacious range of music show lyrics as The Land of My Own Romance from The Enchantress, the most popular of the Rose Maid lyrics, the best lyrics of Ivan Caryll in The Little Café (see The Lady Who Has Seventeen Aigrettes), Yip-I-Addy-I-Ay, Rum Tum Tiddle, You're My Little Persian Rose, *et cetera*.

The music of the music show song? Two general rules hold true. The rule for melodies that are to be invested with a popular and taking quality is this: Either borrow the leading strain of the melody from some more or less "classic" piece of music or paraphrase a popular tune of the immediate yesterday. The "reminiscent" quality is the *sine qua non*. Thus, to illustrate from several more recent examples, the vastly popular Sumurun Girl

was a mere paraphrase, or rewriting, of the already perfectly familiar tune Tammany and the subsequent Tango Tokio a paraphrase of the Sumurun Girl. The Gaby Glide was a paraphrase of Scheherezade; a widely whistled Hippodrome rowing song was Mascagni rewritten; the Omar Khayyam song of the moment is Peg o' My Heart doctored up anew; the Heart to Let of Joseph Howard is Gustav Luders' Turtle Dove little altered; My Yellow Jacket Girl is in part The Chocolate Soldier (with a dash of Sumurun Girl); The Girl of My Dreams waltz song and the Adele waltz song are clearly sisters; the much sung In the Night from The Queen of the Movies is borrowed from a familiar hymn; Isle D'Amour is The Purple Road over again; the moving duet in Sari is largely the Miserere from Trovatore; and so on. The other regulation is known as the "sob chords" rule. Just as the chords $f\sharp c e$ and the chord $d g\sharp c$ struck softly upon the piano will make one feel "sad," so have the musical comedy men edited a table of similar chords and phrases which they include in their melodies of the so-called "sentimental" species. To avoid technical musical characters in so far as possible in this chapter, it may be recorded that the second and third last measures of the "Adele" waltz are standard "sad feeling" provokers among the music show music men. You will find them in scores of songs in as many different shows. As for simple chords known in the inside circle as effective heart-getters, there are such chords

as the oft-repeated e g# c e; as for heart-getting note sequences such oft-used sequences as c b \flat f# a; as for heart-getting "harmony" measures such measures as the following familiar one:



The rules covering the rendition of music show songs specify that an actress singing a sentimental song must blink her eyelids ceaselessly to heighten the pleasurable melancholy of the song; that an actor singing a comic or topical ditty must take his position as close as possible to the footlights and must stare with exaggerated intensity at the audience during the singing; that love duets achieve the best effect when sung on a darkened stage; that a prima donna must sing the high note at the end of her song at the top of her lungs if her number is to "get over"; and that no soubrette may sing a song standing still!

This last brings us to the technical side of music

show chorus dancing. The catalogue of such "dancing" is divided into three sections: 1. feet; 2. knees; 3. shoulders. Foot dancing covers the clog and pyrotechnic kicking. Knee "dancing" is known as "the bow and the jack." Shoulder "dancing" (movement, rather than dancing, we would call numbers two and three) is known as "the eagle rock." [These physical movements of the chorus are not allowed to vary. A musical comedy chorus must not dance in the real sense of the word; it must rock — and its rock must be as unchanging as the rock of Gibraltar. Of chorus mass maneuvers, anon.

One of the most successful of the music show producers has a sort of personal guide-book which (he has admitted to me) he follows with undeviating adherence. I have been privileged to examine this book and, for the insight it provides into the basic uniformity of all musical comedies, it is somewhat remarkable. Let me quote from this curious volume several sample items. I transcribe the latter exactly:

1. First entrance of the comedian — must be worked up in one of three ways. No other ways will do; public won't stand for any others. These three ways are: I. Have automobile blow up with a loud report off stage; II. Have chorus face upper right entrance "hailing" the comedian who is supposed to be coming in that direction and then, while the chorus is in this position, have the come-

dian enter from the opposite side; or III. Have comedian appear at top of flight of steps, start to walk down with majestic dignity, and, when half-way down, have him slip and fall the rest of the way.

2. A sentimental or "sad" song must absolutely be followed by a lively number. This rule can never be neglected.

3. A Mrs. Malaprop character (always to be cast with a fat actress like Connie Ediss or Eva Davenport) must at least once during the show refer to the *haut monde* as the *haut sauterne*.

4. The artistic dance of the show must always be burlesqued by the comedian and the comic female member of the cast.

5. The spinster character in a musical comedy must always be cast with a very thin, tall actress. The public wouldn't stand for a fat spinster.

6. To get an atmosphere of refinement just have the leading actors speak in very low tones.

7. Song sentiment rests in the rhymes "moon" and "spoon," song humor in "sneeze" and "cheese," and *risqué* songs must hinge on the rhymes "clocking" and "stocking." These are all sure-fire.

8. The gambler or police sergeant or captain of industry characters must always bite unlighted cigars in the right corners of their teeth, giving the cigars the upward tilt. This gets over the idea of cruel determination.

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9. The villainess must wiggle her hips. [This is sure-fire hokum.]

10. It's always a good idea to have the show girls stand in line and have the comedian kiss them one after the other. DeWolf Hopper, Jefferson De Angelis, Frank Daniels, Frank Lalor and Raymond Hitchcock have for years gotten away big with this.

The music show has a set of dialogue and "business" rules that must be adhered to closely if the show is to be a success. Thus, in any show one of whose scenes is laid in France, a reference to the River Seine as the "insane" river is essential. What the producers call the "olive line" is placed by them into every music show regardless. [This line is the comparing of something — anything — with an olive. As, for example, "Marriage is like an olive — you've got to get used to it" or "Love is like an olive — a matter of taste." Following the remark "Let us think of the future," it is vital that the woman character to whom the remark is addressed reply: "But this is my birthday and I'm thinking of the present." When a character observes: "When I see that fellow So-and-So again, you *bet* I'll tell him what I think of him!" the character must presently turn around, see that the man against whom he has just lodged the threat has been standing there all the while, and, behold-

ing him, must slink meekly away. When one character absolutely refuses to do a certain thing, the other character must pull out a revolver, whereupon the first character must observe "Oh, I was just fooling. I felt like doing it all the time!" These two last dialogue and "business" stratagems never fail to make a great impression. As a consequence, they are dear to the producers' hearts.

The line "Do you know, I feel guilty?" must always be followed by "Now you arrest my attention"; the line "You told me it was a case of love at first sight" by "Yes, but I've seen you several times since"; and the line "Did you hear about the scandal in the ocean? The catfish had kittens!" by "That's nothing; this morning my cat had mice." The comedian, whose attention is called to a character representing an executioner, must observe: "Isn't he killing!" The remark "I'll give you a good riddle" must evoke the response: "If it isn't good, I'll riddle you with bullets." (If the comedian is of the blackface variety, he must misunderstand "bullets" for "pullets" and pretend to be vastly pleased.) Thus does music show dialogue proceed after an established pattern. I have merely sought to suggest the manner of this pattern, in sufficient measure to connote the balance to you. There are, in all, exactly twenty-four such jokes and ten such bits of so-called "business" which serve as musical comedy's basis. The setting of

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each joke and bit of "business" may, of course, be altered, but the joke and the bit of "business" must (and does) remain intrinsically the same.

The fifteen regular music show plots are rubber-stamped as follows:

1. The "mythical kingdom" plot, with the chief comedian as potentate and the final rescue of the heroine by the United States naval marines led by the hero in the white summer uniform of a lieutenant.

2. The "gadzooks" plot, in which the Prince, betrothed to a lady of blue blood, falls in love with a Simple Maiden and, after a foil combat with candelabra held aloft, and numerous disguises on the part of all concerned, marries the girl of his heart. The "Simple Maid" plot is, in various guises, a great favorite.

3. The "vendetta" or "nihilistic" plot, in which the timid, weak-kneed comedian is forced by a chain of untoward circumstances into the thick of manifold dangers.

4. The "mineral springs" plot, in which the Princess in order to gauge the Prince's love disguises herself as a lowly attendant at the springs.

5. The adapted "French farce" plot, in which the boudoirs of the various leading characters are the centres of wild confusion and door slamming.

6. The "American-Princess" plot, in which the beautiful young Princess falls in love with the handsome young American.

7. The "maid change" plot, in which the heroine changes places with her maid in order to test the hero's love.

8. The "youth is triumphant" plot, in which youth and love are shown to conquer everything.

9. The "dream" plot, in which the leading character falls asleep, dreams wonderful adventures and wakes up in an epilogue.

10. The "mistaken identity" plot.

11. The "breeches" plot, in which the leading actress disguises herself as a boy to be near the man of her heart and subsequently becomes involved in embarrassing predicaments.

12. The "magic" plot, in which the use of a curious perfume or a magic stone or a mysterious liquid compound or something of the sort produces fantastic results.

13. The "two-in-one" plot, in which the King and the notorious bandit are discovered to be really one and the same man.

14. The "eleven o'clock" plot, which hinges upon a wager by the hero that he will succeed in accomplishing something or other in a certain length of time — duly accomplishing that something or other at eleven o'clock.

15. The "she is — !" plot, in which the poor and meanwhile contemptuously treated heroine turns out in the end to be of high position and large estate, and marries the hero who all along has loved her for herself alone. Parental objection is, of

course, as much a part of this plot as most of the others.

The hero of a musical comedy must be of one of the following brands: a Prince, a football player, a naval lieutenant, a lieutenant in the army (heroes under no circumstances must hold higher or lower rank than that of lieutenant), a disowned but repentant son, a rich young American traveling abroad, a poor young American staying at home (must be the hero in all shows in which they want the heroine to marry the old *roué* of a Duke), a violinist, the son of the proprietor of the works, an automobilist or a longer for Broadway.

The villain must be a father, an uncle, a foreigner, a scheming Prime Minister, the ruler of the neighboring kingdom or a husband.

A music show is permitted a scope of approximately twenty-one scenes — approximately so many and no more. These scenes are: "The ballroom of the palace," "the throne room of the palace," "the courtyard of the inn," "the interior of the inn," "Times Square by night," "Maxim's" (or some other Parisian café), "near Versailles," "the Royal Something Hotel, Brighton-on-the-Sea," "corridor of the Hotel Carlton, London," "in the mountains," "on board the battleship Something, U. S. N.," "on the beach at Something," "the interior of the Count's hunting lodge," "the banquet hall" of some London hotel, "a garden party in the Bois," "a villa near Nice (or Fontainebleau)," "over-

looking the Sound," "Outside Dr. Somebody's sanatorium," "on board the yacht, homeward bound," "exterior and grounds of ——," and "the pagoda of the Ten Thousand Dragons."

[The chorus maneuvers are ten in number. These must never be altered. They embrace the driving off of the chorus girls pony-fashion by the chorus men, who hold the girls with reins of vari-colored ribbons; the grouping of the chorus girls around the prima donna (centre stage) with bouquets or wreaths of roses; and the so-called "Barrison Sisters formation," which is to say a closely formed arm-around-waist-of-girl-in-front line which kicks up simultaneously right and then left. Then there is the leap frog maneuver, in which the girls jump over one another; the silk-hatted chorus-man line back of the line of girls, with the two columns keeping step and alternating positions upon every other line of the song; the tandem maneuver in which the men carry some of the girls off on their shoulders, the girls wielding whips and "driving" teams made up of the other girls, who imitate the prance of horses; and the chair maneuver, in which a line of gilt chairs is occupied by the girls, the chorus men standing back of the chairs and, during the course of the song, changing places with the girls. There is, further, the familiar pinwheel maneuver, in which the chorus marches in the form of a revolving pinwheel; the "finale rush," in which the chorus, massed up stage, suddenly dashes in solid array to

the footlights, coming up with a quick halt (this is a "curtain" standby); and the rule of all rules that the last chorus girl in the line dancing off the stage must kick up her foot in a backward direction at the audience.

ACTORS WHO SHALL BE NAMELESS

NEWSPAPER advertisements and the allied gratuitous reading notices, billboards, street car lithographs, circulars, drug store display cards, pass-cajoled reporters and homooousian uncouth publicity devices, massaged and cultivated by salaried press agents, have succeeded in working the present day theatrical public into a condition where it thinks of Ophelia primarily as that actress who wears La Spirite corsets and who advises the wholesale eating of pickled pigs' feet as a certain aid to health and beauty; of Marc Antony as that actor who smokes Tuxedo tobacco, who recommends Herpicide and who was named as co-respondent in Mazie Somebody's divorce case; and of Paula Tanqueray as that actress who is the wife of Sir Charles Surface, who has five babies, who always uses a Rubberset toothbrush and who was observed dancing the fox-trot at Bustanoby's last Wednesday evening with, oh, you know — that character in the Galsworthy play who has that house with the pink shutters on Long Island, who always drinks six glasses of hot water before breakfast and who drives a mauve six-cylinder Mercedes.

I do not believe I exaggerate the general situation unduly, even though my verbal mechanism resolves

itself into puckish form. The nugacious over-advertising and personal exploitation of mummers has gone no small way toward putting the present prevalent squint in the auditorium imaginative powers of the native theatregoing herd. The herd, consequently, when in attendance upon some such play as, for example, *The High Road*, no longer views the playwright's tale of Mary Page, of Mary's liaison with the artist Wilson, of her subsequent marriage to Governor Barnes and of her fight for happiness against the proofs of her wrongdoing insinuated into her household by the newspaper owner Maddock. What the herd now views, as the play unfolds, is rather Mrs. Fiske living in Charles Waldron's apartments, her marriage several years later to Frederick Perry and her struggle to save her own and her husband's name when Arthur Byron comes in and confronts her with her past. This bland state of affairs, no matter whether the play in point be good or bad, patently assists in stifling the complete effectiveness of the playwright's ware.

Of course, the himalayan predilection of mummers for gaudy publicity and the gratifying of that predilection by the managers are not alone responsible for the scotomy of our audiences. Our audiences in considerable measure have a passionate fondness for hocusing themselves. They love to appear conversant with the details of the world of the theatre; they adore being in the know; they burn with the desire to hobnob with the people of

the play world in magazine pictures, in the underwear ads., in the cozy interview of the Sunday paper, or, at closer range, in the flesh-fish cafés of night-time Broadway and the tea rooms of our most inclusive hotels. As a result, "Billie Burke sat at the table next to me at the Plaza yesterday afternoon" carries ten times more weight and interest in a local theatrical conversation than "I saw Pinero's *Mind-the-Paint-Girl* last night."

As a second result, each successive rôle that a mummer seeks to portray becomes, in the eyes of the herd, less and less a characterization and more and more the mummer. It matters not whether the rôles be similar or of spacious divergence. [The rôles fade as the actor in them becomes more widely, more intimately, known. The audience cannot see the forest because of the trees; it cannot grasp the entity of the rôle because the dinned-in name and personality label of the mummer are in the way. And the large pity of it all is that, through the lip-wisdom of promiscuous star-boosting and featuring-given producers, it has come about that our audiences have been led to take their keenest interest in the personalities of many of the least talented actors, the least worthy performers, in the business. The Herbert Yosts and Mathilde Cottrells are advertised (when they are advertised at all) in the pettiest eight-point, while the billboards are inflamed with capitals and the massage cream endorsements are vehement in lithographed visages and the Sunday

dramatic sections are riotous in anecdote of Mr. Hart, Shaffner and Marx, Miss Lucile and the rest of the so-regarded salient individualisms of the native theatre.

A few years ago Mr. Henry Miller took into his company a young actress of considerable talent. He assigned her to play in the piece he was then about to present the rôle of a girl innocent in the ways of the world, wholesome, simple, pure. The young actress achieved a sterling success. When the play was to be shelved for the summer, the young actress, having found a one-act play to her liking, planned to act it in the vaudevilles during her several months of idleness. Mr. Miller, an acute observer of the theatre and its devious tides, read the little play, saw that the rôle the young actress would portray was that of a female crook — and put down his foot with an italicized bang. "It is better for you not to play such a part, even for a short while," he told the girl. "If you do, next season when the people who saw you in vaudeville see you in *The Rainbow*, they'll say to themselves: 'Huh! Why, that girl isn't as innocent as she pretends; she picked pockets' and cracked a safe last time we saw her. Innocent? Not on your life!'"

As first aid to the barnyard imagination of local playhouse patrons, as first aid to the present decrepit status and impudicity of native acting on the American stage, as first aid to public interest gone

wrong, as first aid to playwrights, I make this plea: Anonymity for actors.

Let our actors go nameless to their tasks. Let our actors cease to be incandescent lights and pictured endorsers of O'Sullivan's Rubber Heels and Sanatogen, and let them become rôles, characters etched into plays, figures in moving narratives, elements for the assisting of drama on its respectable course. Let our buskined gentry cease to have their names spread in newspaper linotype via interviews on "The Decline of Pomeranians in Toledo, Ohio," via knock-kneed epigrams and actor's-club repartee, via their perfectly unimportant opinions on very nearly all subjects — and let them occupy such misspent time in thinking about that foreign and seemingly irrelevant thing called acting. Let there be but one column on the first page of the programme the usher hands us, and let that column contain only the names of the characters in the play. Let press agents pressagent plays and let them let the mummies rest. And then, in time, good will be the tonic on the local imagination; good will be the tonic on the local drama; good will be the tonic on the local actor. In the anonymity of the actor — complete or, if that be impossible, in part — reposes no puny logic, no soulful pumpnickel, no witling philosophy. Such anonymity will succor drama. And such anonymity, while it will not hurt a worthy player to the slightest extent, will spare our stage the current

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plague of dress shield and perfumery guarantors who pass muster with the local bumbailiffs, dachshunds and other orchestra chair slouches as capable public performers.

THE OPTIMISM OF TRAGEDY

SHAKESPEARE, whatever his truly multifarious virtues, was at bottom one of those provoking nuisances — an optimist. His optimism is unequivocally reflected in almost all his writings; with particular sunniness, however, in his tragedies. From *Othello*, which he ends happily by comfortably blotting out the lives of his wedded protagonists instead of giving to the drama the inevitably tragic and more terribly natural ending of the Moor living out the rest of his days in lingering, brain-searing, heart-gutting, tormenting suspicion,¹ to *Hamlet*, which he gives a pleasant termination in the death of Hamlet instead of the more relentlessly logical ending of the miserable man living out his poisoned life on earth, the appalling uplift spirit of the dramatist is unmistakably apparent.

Take another of his dramas — *Julius Cæsar*. What clearer proof of Shakespeare's omnipresent optimism, of his trans-Maeterlinckianism, than here? Where Shaw, in his *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, proves for the hundredth time that he is a discriminating pessimist and a sincere observer by having

¹ Sense thus the tragedy of such comedies as *Rebellious Susan* (Henry Arthur Jones) and *The Fairy Tale* (Schnitzler).

deliberately selected for his drama that most miserable portion of Cæsar's life, when the now bald-headed and stringy old Julius was brought face to face with the realest of all men's tragedies, the futile, dried-up passion of an old man for a pink young girl, Shakespeare, the optimist ever, dramatically overlooks the acuter travails in the soldier-statesman's career and benignly makes him a theatrical hero by the simple and perfectly patent "sympathy" trick of killing him at the hated hands of no less than *eight* villains in the very first scene of the third act of a five-act play.

Of course all this is not remarkable when we consider that the authors of the world's greatest tragic dramas have, with possibly but a single exception, been indomitable optimists. Just as our greatest writers of farce and comedy have ever been thorough pessimists! Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, who have been designated respectively as the Phidias, the Polycletus and the Lysippus of Tragedy, were each and all unconscionable whitewashers, not only in their professional but also in their personal attitudes. It is recorded of Æschylus, an eye witness of Grecian triumph in the overthrow and annihilation of the Persian forces under Darius and Xerxes, that his great personal bravery in the battles of Marathon and Salamis was due to an absolute belief that death was the happiest adventure in mortal's life. For his poorly concealed subterfuge in the indirect but pompous proclamation of his own valor, one

need only look into his *Persians* and *Seven Against Thebes*.

Sophocles was an optimist from birth. Of rich parents, extremely handsome and magnetic to the ladies, an athlete and a musician, an inordinate lover of life and life's good times, a mixer of almost Elk proficiency and a popular all-around man, the presence of this cerise quality in the fellow was to be expected. It had been observed that, to speak in the spirit of the ancient religion, it was as if a Providence had crowned Sophocles with every imaginable blessing of this earth, for he proceeded with increasing success in his career till he had passed his ninetieth year, some of his greatest works, indeed, being the fruit of an even later period. Sophocles, the tragic writer of imperial wallop, was the biggest born optimist of his period.

And Euripides! As Plato indicates, here an optimist to the point of effeminacy, an altruist *aux fines herbes*. The tragic writings of the man, as Winkelman has pointed out, proceed to a degree of oleomargarine where he lays on, even to overloading, those merely corporeal charms characterized as a "flattery of the gross external senses," whatever is persuasive and pleasantly striking — in a word, whatever produces a happy impression regardless of intrinsic soundness.

All optimists are, naturally, exaggerators. The optimism of Euripides may thus be appreciated with doubled intensity upon an investigation into his at-

titudes toward such of his characters as his exaggerated moaning old men, his exaggerated suffering heroes made paupers. Euripides, in fact, was so optimistic that he could not help being perfectly aware of the somewhat jocose extent to which his optimism carried him; and as a result he was probably the original sleeve-laughers, the *stammvater* of the tongue-in-the-cheek academy.

August Wilhelm Schlegel, in his lectures on dramatic art and literature in the spring of 1808, in Vienna, said:

“He (Euripides) thought (or pretended to think) it too vulgar a thing to believe in the gods after the simple manner of the people, and he therefore seized every opportunity of interspersing something of the allegorical interpretation of them, and gave his spectators to suspect that the sincerity of his own belief was very problematical. . . . He applied to the heroic life and the heroic ages maxims which could only apply to the social relations of his own times. He threw out a multitude of moral apophegms, not seldom fundamentally false. With all his parade of morality, the aim of his pieces and the general impression which they were calculated to produce was sometimes extremely immoral.”

Here the primordial G. B. S.—with this one difference: the Greek laughed in his sleeve at himself; the Irishman laughs in his sleeve at the public. Inasmuch as the public is ever an optimistic body, it is given only to a pessimist *consciously and consist-*

ently to hoax it with success. What better further evidence of the preposterously creamy mental posture of this Euripides than his sweetening of "Electra" with Ægisthus' exhibition of honeyed hospitality, Clytemnestra's "mother love," etc., especially when this treatment is compared with that of his two predecessors? Among the later writers of ancient tragedy, Agathon was so full of goosefat for humanity and the cosmos generally that Aristophanes was impelled to describe his mind as being "fragrant with ointment and crowned with flowers." And Lycophron, with whose tragedy Alexandra my readers are familiar, was such an unmitigated optimist that he was known even among his colleagues as "he whose eyes see gold in the yellow clay."

These "lovers of their fellow men," these impresarios of the sweetened salves of faith, have ever been our leaders in the creation of tragedy. Passing over the chasm of time to the Italian tragedy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we discover (via Hyginus, Voltaire and the Dramaturgie of Lessing) that its celebrated chef, Maffei with his Merope, was an optimist *de luxe* directly out of Euripides. And in the musical Metastasio — "his heroes, like those of Corneille, ever gallant; his heroines, like those of Racine, ever tender" — and in Alfieri, with his Orestiad, with its crudely hidden optimism derived from the Greeks, we encounter biographical vaseline in robust doses.

On to France and her sixteenth and seventeenth

century writers of tragedy — Corneille, Racine, Voltaire! Could any one but an optimist have written the volitional, trusting heroes of Corneille? Could any one but an optimist have displayed the “ sugared gallantry,” the later personal piety, the pew worship of romantic love as Racine displayed these? Would Madame de Maintenon have had to exercise her person so laboriously against a pessimist? Hardly.

The name of Voltaire you may cast against the strong walls of the argument I am building. Ho, ho, you exclaim, *he* was no haberdasher of honey, no peach *compote*, no professional or personal merchant of molasses! Well, maybe he shall be our one exception, although, had I the space or inclination, I might summon forth in behalf of my contention such doubts over the authenticity of much of Voltaire’s “ pessimism ” as are to be located in his petition to the queen when he was threatened with a burlesque of his *Semiramis*, in the observation of the illustrious founder of the modern romantic school of German literature that “ from the variety of subjects on which Voltaire’s mind was constantly employed, it was impossible for him to avoid shallowness and immaturity of ideas (and their daughter, cynicism),” in the blind influence upon him of the optimistic Greek tragedy, and so on.

And so, through these optimistic fellows who have turned out the prime tragic moans of dramatic history, we come to the Germans, Elias Schlegel, Cronegk, and Weisse, all dyed-in-the-wool followers

of the French plum-jam school. And from these, to Goethe, whose idealizing soul music sings from out *Iphigenia* and *Egmont*, and to Schiller and the rioting sentimentality of his *Kabale und Liebe*, the impressions of earnest piety in his *Maria Stuart* and the inevitable coming to the surface of the syrups of romance in his tragedy *The Bride of Messina*, the rose colorings of his *Maid of Orleans*. And so back again to the sachem of tragedy and the sheik of altruistic musk and sachet, Shakespeare. Here at once rooster of tragedy and chief cock of the metaphysical doctrine of Leibnitz that the existing universe is the best of all possible universes; he whom Milton called "our sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child;" he who was so optimistic that he actually put money into the theatrical business; and he who, having put it in, was still so persistently the ingrained optimist that he could soberly ruminate "all's well that ends well," when, as any sensible even half-pessimist who has ever had anything to do with the theatre knows, all's well that ends at all.

ON THE READING OF VERSE

[THE critical delusions of the theatre are queer things at best. Some day when I get sufficient leisure from reading the daily stack of letters which urge against the worth of my critical opinions the *mot* that I derive much less financial remuneration for my work than do they whose labors a droll fate has brought me to criticize (unfortunately, my correspondents are in error in this belief, although, were they not, they might still be bewitched with the retort that, so far as their own incomes go, be they managers, playwrights, composers or whatever else, there are countless pawnbrokers, haberdashers, procurers, madames, exhead-waiters and bawdy house owners to baffle them with more obese bank books) — some day, I say, I am going to write a lengthy treatise illuminating in full an invoice of these hallucinations. In this treatise I shall point out, among a thousand or so other hallucinatory gems, such delusions as concern the so-called modern tendency toward the “happy ending” (held to be purely a modern commercial growth) and the frequent consequent comparisons of such endings, when they are revealed in our best serious drama, with the so-called “relentlessness of the Greek tragedies” and their “remorseless tragic ends.” This is, of course, translucent piffle. The

"happy ending" was as much a part of the *Eumenides*, the *Œdipus Coloneus*, the *Philoctetus* and of many of the tragedies of Euripides as it happens to be of many of our theatrical pieces of to-day. I shall also make a note that the delusion concerning Shakespeare's "wholly-original-among-all-his works" *Taming of the Shrew* and *Comedy of Errors* may be dissipated by turning to the sources of these very plays in a comedy of the Italian Ariosto and in the *Menœchmi* of Plautus respectively. A page will be devoted to pointing out the stupidity of the insistent belief that a playwright, to be acclaimed an artist, must ever *show* his audience the actions of his characters instead of merely *relating* them, and among the examples in proof of the vacuity of the belief will be quoted Hedda Gabler. And, in this manner, shall I proceed from the critical delusions obtaining in relation to the drama of ancient Greece down through the amplitudinous file to the critical delusions concerning the drama of our current day.

And, so far as the latter goes, one of the leading phantasms that I shall endeavor to disembowel will be the traditional and final decision of so many of my colleagues as to how verse, in contradistinction to prose, ought to be read. With the production by Mr. Winthrop Ames of the *Housman-Barker Prunella*, the usual critical to-do as to the proper manner in which to render verse got under way, the fact that there is scarcely any genuine verse in Pru-

nella discouraging the artillery corps not in the least. Granville Barker is, as he himself would freely admit, anything but a poet. And Lawrence Housman, while a writer of pleasant whimsy, needs only the work of his semi-brother, A. E., to attest to the truth of his own shortcomings in the temple of Sappho. Undeterred, however, Old Doctor Delusion put on his tortoise-shells, cleared his throat and delivered himself of his familiar set of opinions on how verse, as opposed to prose, should be interpreted.

Let us have done with such lugubrious flapdoodle! The reading of verse is of a precisely similar order to the reading of prose — that is, it must be if it desires to be accurate, informed, artistic, musical and pleasing. What do the professors expect? Evidently an elaborate manifestation — however simple and innocent the rhythmical *délassement* in point — of vocal demiquaver, roulade, gorgheggiamento and picchiettato, of bronchial tarantellas and czardas, of laryngeal boleros and fandangos. Forbes Robertson is the actor he is because he recites the verse of Hamlet precisely as he recites the prose of Cæsar and Cleopatra. He exhibits none of the superficial, sentimental attitude toward verse — merely because it is verse — observable on the part of so many of our younger Anacharses of criticism and acting. He realizes that the music of Joseph Conrad and the music of William Shakespeare are each equally melodious, that the former does not

call for a kettledrum and the latter a pansymphonikon: he realizes that both demand exactly the same treatment. The fault of our mummers is not that they cannot read verse — and this is what so confuses the professors — but that they cannot read prose. One who is proficient in the latter art is synchronically proficient in the former. This exalted bosh about the reading of poetry — as if the reading of poetry were a particular, isolated and especial art — is symptomatic of the schoolboy mind.

THE UNIMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

AMONG critics there exists a legend that so long as a dramatist is sincere, it is meet that, however bad his productions, he be treated with a soft and sweet consideration. Thus it occurs that the eye, roving across the transient critique, is oiled regularly by such neighborly bits as "but the playwright is to be praised for his unmistakable sincerity" and "whatever the play is not, it is at least the work of a sincere writer." Now, all this is very amiable and motherly, yet two or three unruly little facts would seem to say I-spy and call the game.

The first of these little facts is in itself a trifling thing. It is merely this: that probably as large a percentage as seven-tenths of the world's valid drama and literature has been the manufacture of writers who not only were not sincere, but were actually sleeve scalawags of a high and fine gusto. In a previous turn in these pages, I indicated, with numerous examples, the measure of the world's mightiest compositions in tragedy which proceeded from gentlemen who were, at heart, not only not murky, but who, contrary to believing in life's tragic aspect, were in their personal philosophies and boarding-houses sidewalk comedians in the grand

style. Any one who knows the first thing about Shakespeare, for instance, knows that, of all men, he was a glutton for mendacity and rarely meant a philosophy he wrote save, of course, when he wrote of rum and women. Did not the fellow himself, forsooth, once admit as much? "Why," he was asked by Robert Peele, "are you ever so persistently insincere in your labors?" To which he offered the now celebrated rejoinder: "Bob, you give me a pain in the ear. No sincere man who is or hopes to be regarded as an artist descends to so low and so facile a means as sincerity to trick fame and repute and moneys. That is reserved for the mahogany heads, the vacant gourds, who have nothing to sell *but* sincerity. Do you get me, old tosspot?" . . . I do not remember the exact wording.

In all forms of literature, the books stand much the same. From Æschylus to Shaw, from Euripides to the five-aced Wedekind, from Balzac and Jean Jacques Rousseau (that Hans Christian Andersen of seduction and papahood) to Oscar Wilde, from Becque to Synge, artist to artisan, artisan to artist, up and down, back and forth, one must appreciate, if one balances biography against shelf and stage fiction, the whimsy of the notion that sincerity and art are inseparable.

Your true artist is seldom, if ever, sincere; for he realizes that to write only what he believes is to confess his pettiness, narrowness and his inflexible limitations. Perfectly sincere men have been or are

rarely artists. Or even mere effective producers. What is more, perfectly sincere men, whatever their line of trade, are not worth a hoot to civilization. You will find them in some such absurd position as congressman obsessed with the idea that the Japanese ought to be kept out of the United States, but the English let in; or as philanthropist with the idea that what newsboys need is a fund to give them fresh air — which, as Robert H. Davis would put it, is like asking a letter-carrier to take a walk.

The one way to accomplish things worth-while in this world is to be insincere, having a dexterous care only to conceal the insincerity lest the mob, in its ignorance as to real values whatever their name, be inclined to feel that it is being made game of. Where a man who is doing more for American journalism than Hearst — and where a more superb pitcher with the left hand? By the expedient of publishing unreliable newspapers, this gentleman is unselfishly encouraging the business of his rivals, and so building up what in, say, a few hundred years, will be a half-way honest and fearless national journalism.

Where a man who has done more to make the mob appreciate the true beauty of the human form in the nude than Anthony Comstock — and where a man less sincere in admitting the real purpose back of his nosings and suppressions? Think what ample good such indubitably insincere fellows as Dr. Parkhurst and Harold Bell Wright have accom-

plished: how the former has worked subtly to incite the populace to pleasure-giving immoralities by telling the populace that he believed such acts were sinful, how the latter has subtly encouraged the public to read better literature by giving it his annual dam-burst of balderdash. Think of the way Brieux, as specious a jester as ever breathed in the mush air of Montmartre, contrived to discourage undue continence and the resultant mental lethargy of his nation by his adroit trick of so melodramatizing and exaggerating the dangers of loose living that even the veriest blockhead would glimpse the farce of the ubiquitous crusading statistic.

Do you believe for a moment that Botticelli believed what he painted, that he did not from a vast ocular experience know he was lying about women in the same proportion that Guillaume paints the truth about them to-day (and is therefore, is Guillaume, a ratified hack)? Do you believe that either Haydn or Mozart believed in trick use they made of the coda? Investigate — and then give ear to the seriously sincere *finis* fireworks of Reggie De Koven and Charles K. Harris! Consider Verlaine and his vivid pæans to the ladies. Consider that famous tract of Balzac's, and then recall the fellow's sentimental slobbering over the ancient flapper who had run off to Switzerland. What of De Quincey? And what of the celebrated divine whose address on the sacredness of the Seventh Commandment carried such conviction? Could a

sincere Hauptmann have done both *The Sunken Bell* and *Michael Kramer*? Does George Ade really believe that the way for a wife to hold her husband is to fill the flat of evenings with pinchable hussies? No. Only men who fail to think are sincere; third-raters like Maeterlinck (arch arbiter of the after-life rumble-bumble), D'Annunzio and their kind. Truly great men and real artists — or at least able men and comparatively real artists — are generally prime fakirs, whatever their particular direction of activity. True, they may be temporarily unconscious of their faking, it may be unintentional — but this figures not in the final logic of the thing.

Was P. T. Barnum, probably America's greatest amusement artist, a sincere man? Was Elbert Hubbard, probably America's greatest advertising writer, a sincere man? Is Brand Whitlock, probably America's most clear-sighted public official, a sincere man? Isn't Gordon Craig laughing at us and isn't Reinhardt dead serious — and isn't Craig three times the artist Reinhardt is? Isn't it the sourball who writes the world's finest love stories? And the satirist who writes the best serious plays? The only consistently sincere men who, so far as one knows, have amounted to anything have been Marc Antony, Napoleon, Beethoven, Rubens, Robert E. Lee and George M. Cohan. And there is some doubt at that, when one recalls his having invoked the aid of the human voice in his working out of the Ninth Symphony, as to the sincerity of Beethoven.

Now that I have gone to such length in outlining the first of the arguments against sincerity — and have been so persuasive — I wonder if I need proceed with the additional arguments? What need to prove to you what you already know: that if we arbitrarily praise a man for his sincerity we must arbitrarily praise every impassioned numskull who offers up his divers *opera* for our consideration; that if sincerity is *per se* a quality to be admired we must, perforce, admire such intellectual slop merchants as provide us with white slave plays, plays in which poor working girls reject rich and handsome suitors, novels of feminine psychology by disappointed old maids, stories in which the arrival of a baby inevitably brings about the repentance and reconciliation of an estranged man and wife or man and mistress, thesis dramas by Charles Klein and chorusless musical shows? What need to prove to you that were sincerity the seventh heaven, one would have to enfold unto one's bosom such angels as Elinor Glyn (who beyond doubt believes what she writes), to say nothing of all the dramatic critics who are sincere in their trust in dramatists' sincerity?

As sure as you will find the idea of Edward Knoblauch's *My Lady's Dress* in Wilde's *The Young King*, as sure as the theory of the influence of the dead over the living expounded in *The Return of Peter Grimm* figures in the play of the German Gustav Streicher entitled *The Power of the Dead* (*Die Macht der Toten*), as sure as the un-

identified Japanese girl who plays the leading rôle in the current moving picture bearing the elegant and dignified title *Nipped*, is a more charming actress than nine-tenths of the young white women adorning the Broadway stage, as sure as the whole theory of characterization in acting (on the part of the actor rather than the author and producer) falls to pieces when one compares the stage with these same moving pictures, as sure as each and all of these, the sincerity bugaboo has done as much to retard the progress of sound, genuine, manly drama in America as have all the American dramatists put together.

And so, relevantly, we come to the case of a play by Miss Harriet Ford and Mr. Harvey O'Higgins called *Polygamy*. Although the authors have been widely endorsed for their sincerity in the writing of this work, it is this very sincerity on their part that has hurt what might conceivably have been a highly interesting piece of dramatic writing. Whereas it is patent that Mr. O'Higgins is the headwork of the collaborative couple and Miss Ford the handwork, the error of sincerity is probably to be laid for the major portion at Mr. O'Higgins' door. What the result? Mr. O'Higgins, instead of presenting the case for or against polygamy from a new plane, has permitted himself to present that case as nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand would present it. And the presentation, being consequently a mere parroting of what the man in the

street sincerely thinks of polygamy, resolves itself into a tedious business. The sincere view-point is most often the trite, the commonplace, view-point. Would it not, therefore, have been much wiser for Mr. O'Higgins to have forgotten his own (which is to say, the general) idea of polygamy and to have permitted himself a sufficient insincerity to present the problem from a fresher and assuredly a hundred-fold more engaging angle?

Mr. O'Higgins' philosophy in the matter of plural marriage is the senile, palæocrystic philosophy of the uplift magazines, to wit, that plural marriage is, in itself, a bad thing, that it harbors ruin for the home, the state and the spiritual being, that it is immoral, and so on. In brief, the species of philosophy that may be "left lying on the library table," that may be read aloud to little Sylvester and little Azalia, that gets the carpet sweeper and the Sapolio and the Van Camp's pork and beans ads. into the advertising section. In short, the passing of the half million circulation mark, pictures by Brown Brothers, and Mr. McRake at his safe game of playing platitudes *fortissimo*. To be sure, such stuff is sincere! That is what makes it so sad. In Mr. O'Higgins' case, I cannot resist thinking that it is a sort of pity. In his previous play — The Dummy — this gentleman wrought an entertaining evening by picturing the young boy of the species insincerely, picturing him as longing ever to be a detective when he (O'Higgins) knew full well from his own and

every other man's experience that what a young boy wants more than anything else to be is not a detective, but a burglar. Did you ever see a detective badge in a toy shop? Certainly not. But you've seen miniature dark lanterns and black masks there by the crate! I have yet to hear of a boy who wanted to be a Lupin. If it isn't a burglar he wants to be, his ambition, you will find, is to be an iceman, the driver of a delivery wagon, a drum major or a husband of Lillian Russell. But the fact remains that when he grows up he usually sticks to his boyhood's first predilection and remains a burglar.

To return to polygamy. Why is it the deplorable business Mr. O'Higgins believes it to be? Can Mr. O'Higgins name one people in the civilized world who are as happy, as well behaved, as prosperous, parents of as fine and healthy and adoring children, as law-abiding, as were the Mormons when in the full of plural marriages? Was a Mormon, in those days, ever to be found in the Keeley Cure? Or as a tramp upon the public highway? Or in the divorce court? Or figuring even in yellow journal scandal? Were "white slaves" ever heard of in the Utah of those blessed days? Were there parched old maids to patronize and encourage the Swami brothels? Were there married men hanging around the stage door of the Salt Lake City opera house? Were Raines Law hotels — or hotels like them — necessary? Was the sale of pasteboard suitcases as big then as it is to-day? Do the court

records of those Utah years bear one unwritten law case? Was there a to-do over the question of segregating or not segregating vice? Was there vice? Were there business failures? Or cashiers scooting off to Canada? Was there a jail? Would Brioux's Damaged Goods have sizzled the Mormons as it more recently sizzled the hitherward villagers? A thousand such questions come to mind. And they would seem to make one pause and reflect. If marrying one woman is moral, why isn't marrying two women twice as moral?

Another sincere, and hence less interesting than he might otherwise be, author is Mr. Willard Mack. His sincere play, *So Much for So Much*. His sincere belief: (1) that the offices in the business districts are lyceums maintained for the primary purpose of luring beautiful stenographers, by means of jewels, taxicabs and suppers, to ruin, and (2) that the beautiful stenographers don't like it. Here, at a glance, the typewriter *au Lait*, Help Wanted *redivivus*, Laura Murdock at the Remington, Iris Bellamy pounding a Smith-Premier — but with virtue eventually kicking the goal to the bleacher's voluminous cheers. Mary Brennan is a poor working girl. But she has a figure. And her employer has an eye. Furthermore, he has read his *Tosca* and, following the ancient custom, traps Mary in his den and prepares to sardou her. The rest you know. If the day ever comes that I go to a play of this order and witness a consummation of the busi-

ness, I shall consider my work in life done and give up dramatic criticism for good and all. And become an actor.

This Mr. Mack, had he been disloyal to his point of view, might have done a better play out of his subject matter. Eugene Walter, when he executed *The Easiest Way*, took practically the same subject, treated it insincerely and the result was an excellent piece of stage writing. Certainly Mr. Walter did not, and does not, for an instant believe that the Murdock would have been abandoned by her broker. Momentarily maybe, but scarcely with finality. Mr. Walter is a gentleman of too comprehensive a knowledge of the world we live in to have written this honestly. (There is, at this point, a fine argument against me. A similar situation in *The Song of Songs*, Scene IV, has been handled in exactly the opposite manner. And, as a consequence, presents an authentic and truly fine bit of observation. But then, for all I know, Mr. Sheldon probably does not believe sincerely in the logic of the scene. The two-fold merit of the Sheldon manipulation of the situation over the handling by Mr. Walter may simply mean that Mr. Sheldon is in this matter twice as insincere, and therefore twice as pertinent, as was Mr. Walter.)

To return to Mr. Mack. Imagine how much more interesting his play would have been had he, casting aside his own attitude toward his thesis, presented the case of a Mary Brennan who, scenting

quickly the sort of employer she was up against, set herself forthwith with a large cunning to practise against the fellow an elaborate teaser-technique, leading him on, gently tormenting him, plying against him and his pseudo-suave wiles the strategy of a Mary Turner versed in the chicanery of the sex skirmish, all the while fishing out of him money wherewith to provide her family and herself not only with necessities but luxuries, all the while visiting upon him that subtle blackmail called baby-eyeing — and, finally, when the old spitzbub began to show signs of being winded, giving him a good-natured slap on the back, telling him just how she deliberately made a complete ass of him and bidding him be the sufficient sport to take his medicine and shut up. Not an unusual tale, true enough, but one that has at least the merit of a greater verisimilitude and the additional merit of a sounder observation. Mr. Mack's philosophy that, however wily a woman, she is bound to meet men with the ability to best her in the diplomacy of sex, is sweet and luscious fibbery. In the matter of sex sham battles, there probably never lived a woman who could not fool and put to reluctant rout any man who sought to intrigue against her. Provided, of course, she did not like the fellow. The idea of the great dangers with which women who lead business lives are supposed to be confronted is mere pretty sentimental moonshine. In all probability you will find that it was started, not by the women, but by the business men themselves by

fictitious way of gratifying their vanity as bold Don Juans.

Mr. Mack deserves his share of praise, however, for the skill with which he maneuvers his faulty thesis. He writes directly; he flouts the supposedly necessary secondary or sub-plot; he touches off aptly and adroitly the idiosyncrasies of character. In his engagement with the lower strata of life he is more successful than in his essay to depict what, in comparison, may be referred to as the upper strata. [There lives no man like his wealthy malefactor this side of the novels of the late Busy Bertha M. Clay. There exists no man-servant like the butler to his villain this side of the butler in *The Law of the Land*.

*

If your imagination be such that it can agree to Miss Emily Stevens as the wondrous little mermaid of Hans Christian Andersen's familiar and lovely fairy tale, then Edward Sheldon's dramatization of that tale under the title of *The Garden of Paradise* is a more magnetic spectacle than it seems, or rather seemed, to me. If, as you picture her, the wondrous little mermaid imitates Mrs. Fiske's gestures and walks like Mrs. Fiske and talks like Mrs. Fiske, then, as I say, the stage version of the story may soothe and convince you and may sing once again its song of tender romance into your soul. But if, to the contrary, your idea of the wonderful little mermaid — an idea yours from childhood — is of a

bit rarer and less real creature whose movements are as of a silver eel, whose voice is of the dulcet tremor of the bashful south wind and who looks like the pictures of Evelyn Nesbit at sixteen, well —

When, alas, will our producers realize that technique is as nil where a rôle calls for something approximating beauty; that the circumstance that a young woman happens to be the niece of a prominent actress does not indicate arbitrarily that the young woman, however great her virtuosity in facial expression, can bring herself to look like a fairy? As to Mr. Sheldon's rendering of the Andersen tale into footlight form, there seems little to remark on save to observe that several of the criticisms directed against his work (which was by no means satisfying) possessed no basis in fact. For instance, it was urged cocksurely against Mr. Sheldon that he was no minnesinger on the ground that he had, in his manipulation of the fable, here and there injected into his rhythmic prose, words and phrases not in keeping with the musical story and allusions to things so crass and real as to be out of place in the atmosphere of poetry. Which silly criticism might be applied quite as aptly to Shakespeare (see, for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) as to Sheldon.

*

The United States is a country where all men are created free and equal and where any boy, it matters not how poor or humble, may, when he grows

up, become a famous one-step dancer. Gone is the low ambition to become President. Gone the hankering after the muscle of John L. Sullivan and the dream of a batting eye like Pat Tebeau's. Gone the passion to wear a Stetson, shoot at the glass balls and bow magnificently to the boxes as Buffalo Bill. Dead the desire to stand on a rock in the backyard in father's ulster and grandma's bonnet turned sidewise and be Napoleon looking longingly to France and faded fame. Dead the lust to scalp Gustav, the neighbor's boy, of his feather duster. Apart from the always present ambitions quoted in an earlier chapter, it is evidently now boyhood's single ambition to get up in a restaurant with a girl and display some New Ones to the gaze of the envious and abashed onlookers. To twirl round half a dozen times in swift succession without landing on top of the girl in the midst of some dinner party's soup course. To hold the girl at arm's length and let her wiggle three times in her corset, then suddenly to grab her back and pirouette her off against some other dinner party's salad.

A rustic and a vulgar aspiration? Not at all. The Duke of Wellington was never so happy as when lifting some lady through the maze. Louis XV was vainglorious of his prowess as a couple-bumper. George Washington, while no Maurice, was as flip with the feet as any gallant of his day; and it is recorded of him that the joyful girls of Providence, Rhode Island, whom he would fain now

and again visit with, regarded him as the best dancer they knew. Read in the back-stairs records of King Leopold and you will discover that on one occasion of wager he contrived to kick a mark half an inch higher on the wall than his Lola — and would have won had he not lost his balance and landed on the floor. The current mayor of New York City is as nimble a hesitation professor as the late King Edward, as Prince of Wales, was a round waltzer. Dancing with a lovely actress in Paris during his gay days, the good Prince, so goes the story, marathon'd all the other couples off the wax, and then did a *pas seul* to show he was still there. Bismarck, in his younger days, was, you may be sure, no slouch at Terpsichore; nor was Dr. Munyon. It is recorded of the younger Dumas (The Foibles of Paris, Jean Bouttlier, Chapter XI) that never once did he step on a partner's toe. And it is whispered by intimates of Gerhart Hauptmann that he is practicing in secret!

The enormous vogue launched by the two Castles, and so deplored by all fat persons, is significant of a more rational attitude on the part of our hitherto ungraceful nation toward the merits of the dance. Where, several years ago, it was the habit to deride dancing as the profession of girlish gentlemen and their escorts, we have now awakened to the fact that dancing has its several unmistakable values. In the first place, there is nothing like dancing for wearing down the mounting tendencies of a jag. In the

second place, it is an excellent thing for the boot-makers and café proprietors. In the third place, it throws a great many of its devotees among the best people — when the floor is slippery. And in the fourth place, it permits a man to hug twenty girls an evening in place of the former one. The Castles recently hopped around in a show called Watch Your Step. The noteworthy feature of the show was the touch of ironical burlesque which was applied to its ingredients: as in the case of its business man's "office de danse," its grand opera boxes with occupants playing bridge, reading newspapers, waltzing and hovering over stock tickers, and its Pullman sleeping car *full of beautiful girls in openwork nighties lying in their berths with the curtains open.*

THE SAD PLAY VERSUS THE SERIOUS PLAY

IT is the prescription of a large parcel of our theatrical reviewers habitually to mistake (1) a deep male speaking voice for acting ability; (2) physical motion for dramatic action; (3) veracity for vulgarity; (4) all audible or visible hysteria, such as bosom-heaving, fist-clenching and nose-blowing, for emotion; (5) age for experience; (6) merely terse dialogue for dramatic dialogue; and — (7) sad plays for serious plays.

A sad play, that is to say a play which brews a bourgeois tear, which moves in an atmosphere of gloom, is inevitably regarded by these gentlemen as a serious play, while a gay play, a play which shakes the belly to mirth, is quite so inevitably looked on as the contrary. Thus do we observe such an absurd snifle salad as *The Shadow* and such a nose-opera as *Marie-Odile* approached with profound and studious frown, while such a flip, light, laughing, jolly thing as *Androcles and the Lion* — which is a thousand times as serious — is amiably but promptly dismissed as — let me see, how goes the phrase? Ah, yes, I have it — “good fun.” [The philosophy of such critical pinochle is, of course, unconsciously jocose. Particularly when one recalls that a play is

often sad in proportion to its absence of thought; that emotion and calm hard thinking seldom go together; that new ideas ever impress the community as comic, and that, in brief (to repeat Walpole), life is a tragedy to those who feel and a comedy to those who think. As the eye becomes moist, the brain becomes dry.

Let us look first to *The Shadow*, one of the *contes drolatiques* of those Von Tilzers of the tear, Dario Niccodemi and Michael Morton, done to order for the person of Miss Ethel Barrymore and following to the letter the old Frohman commandment that in all Frohman plays the woman must have the whip hand. The facetious extent to which this sentimentalization of the skirt has developed in the local show business is, by the way, acutely instanced in a comparison of this play with a play called *The Fallen Idol*, which immediately preceded it on the metropolitan stage. [The *Fallen Idol* held a brief for the healthy wife bound by law to a paralytic husband. *The Shadow* holds a brief against the healthy husband bound by law to a paralytic wife!

The Shadow, being a lugubrious film, has, as set down, been accepted widely as a serious play. And yet, it remains that its *bühne* bawlings, its salty drizzles, spurt from a set of characters whose motives and decisions are patently spurious. These characters are of the French upper middle class. Yet their every posture on the pedestal of morals, marital relationship and ethical conduct reveals un-

mistakable string-pulling by an Anglo-Saxon hand. The characters, indeed, are approximately as French as an American actor's pronunciation of *monsieur*. Their names are Tregnier, Magré and Michel Délon, but their philosophies are Smith, Jones and Bill Jenkins. This, probably the consequence of the bi-national nature of the play's authorship. I may imagine nothing more difficult than a piece of sound dramatic workmanship dealing with Parisian morals emanating from a collaboration twixt a Frenchman and an Anglo-American.

As I envisage it, this play is a mere effigy of the commonplace French drama of two decades ago. The touch of thematic novelty which many of my colleagues claim for it, to wit, the fact that the wife is a paralytic and that the husband's amorous aberration thus assumes a new justice, seems perfectly inconsequent, inasmuch as the wife recovers from her paralysis fifteen minutes or so after the curtain rises on the first act and inasmuch as, therefore, from this point on, the stage traffic resolves itself into the bearded triangle of the equally bearded French drama. If, forsooth, there be any novelty to the play, that novelty must repose in the acts that occur in advance of the first act. Certainly, once the curtain is up a scant quarter hour, we give audience to nothing newer or more vital than a skeleton of Becque's *L'Enlèvement* (originally produced in 1871) — with the bones removed.

Marie-Odile, a play by Edward Knoblauch, being

both sad and produced by Mr. Belasco, was taken in doubly serious manner by my *confrères*.

This play, though its language is of the deft and musical quality associated with its author's name, amounts to little more than a burlesque of Maeterlinck's *Sister Beatrice*. John Luther Long's play, *Kassa*, done by Mrs. Leslie Carter about seven years ago at the Liberty Theatre and dealing in a general way with the same stage materials, was a more imaginative and a better play. Although, true enough, a bad play. The central idea of *Marie-Odile* has been maneuvered many times by many men, and Mr. Knoblauch has not only not improved upon these maneuverings, but has, to the contrary, failed to uncurtain anything like the proportion of lively imagination vouchsafed in them. A play by a sophomore in Harvard College, done half a dozen years ago and printed in one of the undergraduate gazettes, dealt the chief point of Knoblauch's play a vastly better treatment. To the ancient tale of the nun led into the pensive glammers of the world, Knoblauch has brought but a single touch of pseudo-modernity. He has made his Herr Lorelei a young Prussian under-officer. And this solitary fresh touch, to boot, has plunged Mr. Knoblauch into several absurdities. Imagine the chief officer of a company of Uhlans, ever the *über-professoren* of military discipline and rigidity, urging one of his corporals, in a tactical crisis, with the enemy not far away and about to register an attack, imagine the

officer remaining behind for a spell in order to urge the corporal to defer carrying out an important scouting mission long enough to seduce a likely looking girl. Imagine a company of Uhlans, with the foe near at hand, carrying on high jinks inside a convent without a single man on guard duty outside.

The play is, in short, a belated effort again to make money out of bad drama soaked in so-called religious atmosphere. Not merely bad drama, but what to many must seem indiscreet and objectionable drama. Imagine the Mother Superior of a convent banishing from the convent a nun who has come by a baby — and yet blessing the baby ere she casts it out. Imagine a convent made the theatrical residence in Act I of the old Cinderella story, with the Mother Superior and all the sisters save one serving as the wicked stepmothers; the theatrical residence in Act II of Paul Potter's *The Conquerors*; and the theatrical residence in Act III of a baby spotlight haloing with deliberate significance the bastard son of a young German insurance clerk. Such things may not be sacrilegious, but they may be irreverent. Against all such tawdry attempts at capitalizing the religious sentimentalities I stand opposed. If we are to have religion and its parts treated in the drama — and where a better theme? — let us by all means have the theme treated intelligently and with a show of philosophic skill, rather than that it be served up as a medium for a Hanlon Brothers' tassel-tinsel extravaganza. The

considerable success of Androcles may be the finger pointing at last to a public concurrence in this wish. And the Androcles box-office may at last in a measure be contradicting Shaw's until now truthful statement that "the deepest realities of religion are the most unbearable of all subjects for the purely theatrical public."

Although, of course, I am not one to make pretense to a knowledge of the set of tricks called stage direction, it yet appears to me that Mr. Belasco's production of the Knoblauch work might possibly in several directions be improved upon. For example, would not a withholding of the aureolizing baby spotlight from the head of Marie-Odile during the first two acts vitalize the presence of the effulgence in the last act, wherein is drawn the analogy of the Virgin Mary? For example, when Marie-Odile is called upon by the boisterous soldiers to lift them a toast, when Marie-Odile then speaks her prayer that they may be soon and safely returned to their mothers (regards to Owen Davis, Jules Eckert Goodman, *et al.*), would not a gradual cessation of ribaldry on the part of the men of war be more effective than the instantaneous and unanimous silence and bowing of heads? For example, is not the sympathy trick of Marie-Odile's drudgery overdone; is there not too much floor sweeping, furniture dusting, waiting on table, and does not the little Marie-Odile thus gradually become less sympathetically impressive as a poor nun and more

sympathetically impressive as a good servant girl? For example, why the casting of the crack Coldstream Guards of Prussia in the bodies of a grotesque congress ranging from five feet two to six one? For example, why not a detection of the guard error mentioned hereinbefore? But — these, after all, are trivial things. The main point is this: Mr. Knoblauch has not composed a good play.

Washing the hands of such distasteful obligations of criticism, it becomes a happy duty to announce *The White Feather*, by Messrs. Lechmere Worrall and Harold Terry, as the best farce, by all odds, that England has sent us in many years. That the play was not intended as farce is, of course, not at all to the authors' discredit. Let us not forget that Columbus believed merely again to touch Asia and in the act discovered a new continent. A farce is a good farce in proportion to the amount of laughter it provokes. And by this definition [*The White Feather* is not only a good farce but — as I have said — a really great farce.

Almost all comedy is based on the fact that a man will do anything for the woman he loves. So is almost all tragedy.

Almost all farce is based on the celebrated problem that if the village barber shaves every man in the village except those who shave themselves, and the barber is in the habit of shaving himself, who shaves the barber? And where not based on this problem, farce is grounded upon the equally re-

nowned theory that if a man twenty-five years old marries a girl five years old (i.e., the man being five times as old as the girl) and lives with her five years, the man will then be thirty years old and the girl ten, thus making the man only three times as old as the girl; that if they live together ten years more, the man will be forty and the girl twenty, thus making the man only twice as old as the girl; that if they live together ten years more the man will be fifty and the girl thirty, thus making the man considerably less than twice as old as the girl; and that, therefore, if the man and girl live together long enough they will be of the same age. Substituting villainous German spies for the village barber, heroic English secret service agents for the twenty-five year old man, and Now-All-Together-Boys-Rule-Britannia for the five year old girl, Messrs. Worrall and Terry have otherwise adhered closely to the farce canons.

Why some of my critical colleagues should have seen fit to regard this play merely as an exceedingly cheap melodrama and quickly dismiss it as such I am unable to comprehend. To be sure, it was meant to be melodrama, but certainly this is small reason for the critical oversight in not having analyzed the play as an exceedingly fine farce. Observe, if you please, the materials. The scene is "a private sitting-room in the Wave Crest Hotel" on the east coast of England. This chamber is occupied by one who calls herself Sanderson and who, being a Ger-

man spy commissioned with the immediate execution of a critical enterprise, invites a couple of British secret-service sleuths to spend the week-end with her. Following the other well-known custom obtaining in espionage, the lady then brings to her room three more Pilsner spies who craftily conceal their identity from the Bass scouts by dropping trays full of dishes whenever the latter give indication that their suspicions are being aroused. The canny Würzburger spies exercise additional caution by making sure all the doors and windows are wide open before consulting in loud voices as to their secret plans, and further indicate their cunning by leaving their tracings of the British fortifications on the tables and sofas only when the English secret-service people are in the room. Where, I now ask you, a nobbier premise for brilliant farce? Where a site for a more elegant guffaw brewery?

Coincident with this farce there was presented at the Maxine Elliott Theatre a second admirable farce to be identified generally as *The Rented Earl*. *The Rented Earl* was by Mr. Salisbury Field, but the admirable farce was by Mr. William A. Brady. Like *The White Feather*, *The Rented Earl* was a play of noteworthy mediocrity, but this circumstance prospered little in diminishing the enjoyability of the evening. Mr. Field's play dealt with the smart society colony at Lenox and Mr. Brady, ever on the alert for novelty and especially so in a season consecrated to novelty, conceived the excellent farce

notion of producing the play with actors in the rôles of the society characters. And, never satisfied with doing things in a half-way manner, this astute producer then conceived the droll idea of using for the last act scene (which Mr. Field had specified as "the terrace of The Westways, Mrs. Sanderson-Burr's Lenox house") the last act set of his old musical comedy *The Balkan Princess*. By these subtle devices Mr. Brady took what was intrinsically a dull play and made of it an hilarious evening.

Why is it, you wonder, that actors so regularly make a ridiculous showing in so-called society rôles? The explanation is simple enough. Cast for a society character, an actor or actress imagines that he or she must, for the proper delineation of that character, affect a mien and manner at once suavely genteel and punctilious, courtly and *dégagé*. The result? Absurd, of course. For the proper delineation of such a character, an actor or an actress must affect a mien and manner at once ill-bred and vulgar. . . . As I have countless times observed, the only persons who do not act like society people are society people.

In connection with the performance of this play there is the quality of the *apropos* in the following remark of Henry James: "Purity of speech on our stage doesn't exist. Every one speaks as he likes and audiences never notice; it's the last thing they think of. The place is given up to abominable dialects and individual tricks; any vulgarity flourishes;

and, on top of it all, the Americans, with every conceivable crudity, come in to make confusion worse confounded." I have heard Mrs. Leslie Carter, an American, pronounce "never" *nevv-hair*; I have heard Miss Billie Burke, an American, pronounce it *satisfackshawn*; I have heard Mr. Robert T. Haines, an American, do up "relentless" as *relintless*, and Mr. Milton Sills, an American, dispense "suspicion" as something akin to *soospisiyon*. I have heard all this, and more. But I have also heard Mr. Julian L'Estrange, an Englishman, render "immediately" *immejutly*; I have also heard Mrs. Patrick Campbell, an English subject, project "delightful" as *dell-ight-fole*; I have also heard Mr. Beerbohm Tree, an Englishman, discharge "cemetery" as *scimetry*, and Miss Marie Tempest, an Englishwoman, gargle "conviction" into something like *cohenviction*. I have heard all this, and more. But I have never, not even from the tonsil cave of a low American vaudeville actor, heard such bizarre sounds, presumably standing for the English language, as emanated from the English actor D'Orsay in the rôle of the earl in this Field play. Let us be fair in this matter of pronunciation and articulation. Let us Americans forget our patriotism once in a while, our¹ stanch patriotism for England and everything English from King George up to Phyllis Dare, and remember that, however much our own mummers may chew into the language, there are British actors equally as proficient in the technique

of mastication. The circumstance that "secretary" pronounced *secretry* by an English buffo massages the American tympanum as smarter and more fashionable than plain American sec-re-ta-ry ought not fool the jury for a moment.

SOME REMARKS ON THE THEATRE

"The great are great only because we are on our knees. Let us rise!"—*Prud'homme*.

I

THE BATHOS OF DISTANCE

WE hear talk about theatrical traditions—"the proud traditions of the theatre," so I believe the phrase is. What are they, these proud traditions? Did the Greeks write one play so fine (from any point of view you choose) as Hauptmann's Weavers or Barrie's Peter Pan or Shaw's Cæsar and Cleopatra? Did Augustin Daly know one half so much about producing a play as David Belasco? Was Booth as good an actor, by and large, as Forbes Robertson? Is not Elsie Ferguson thrice as capable as Mary Anderson—and isn't she twice as comely? Was the *mise-en-scène* of the playhouse of Molière to be compared with that of Winthrop Ames? Compare Lester Wallack, as actor-manager, with Arnold Daly or William Faversham. In the original Gilbert and Sullivan productions was there a better leading comedian than DeWolf Hopper? Did Charles K. Hoyt write a better farce than George Ade's County Chairman, or Buchanan's

The Cub or Howard's Snobs or Margaret Mayo's Baby Mine? Was Charlotte Cushman as competent an actress as Julia Marlowe? Are not John Galsworthy's *Strife* and *The Pigeon* finer pieces of work than the best of Sardou; Bahr's *Concert* and Brieux's *Hannetons* better comedies than Robertson's? Did A. M. Palmer know as much about casting a play as A. H. Woods? The *Lady of Lyons* was consciously designed by the piqued Bulwer-Lytton as boob-bait after the failure of his *Duchess de la Valiere*; is it any better than the more recent mob-meal unconsciously provided by Henry Arthur Jones under the title of *Mrs. Dane's Defense*? Where in antiquity a better farce fellow than Feydeau? Is it likely that Shakespeare's production of any one of his dramas was as effective as the presentation of his *Winter's Tale* at the lamented New Theatre? Were Congreve and Wycherly as good as Caillavet and de Flers? Compare the girls in *Mlle. Nitouche* with those in the *Follies*.

II

ON GLAMOUR

They say that glamour has gone from the drama; that this is why the race of theatregoers is dying. They say the old air of mystery, the old sorcery and strange fascination, are no more. But they are mistaken. It is not the drama from which glamour has gone; it is the theatre. [There was a day — remote,

alas — when to go to the theatre was an occasion, a privilege. A privilege, forsooth, to be enjoyed not indiscriminately by *hoi polloi*. In those days, the cut-rate ticket was not known. In those days, “paper” was used for snowstorms into which to drive erring daughters with their babies and not, as now, for snowstorms with which to drive erring movie-goers into theatres. To-day, it is no longer a privilege, as I say, to go to the theatre. Anybody may go. There are even some theatres to which dramatic critics are admitted.

III

RICHARD MANSFIELD

Mansfield was looked on by many as a fine actor because of the realism of his death scenes. Any actor can “die” realistically. The good actor is the one who can *live* realistically.

IV

A NOBLE DRAMATIC MOMENT

There are, in the world's drama, many noble situations, many stunning moments. Search into them all, very carefully. Then tell me if you have found a finer one than that in *The Mob* of Galsworthy, where the mere distant and approaching rattle of the drums shake the iron-bound logic and resolve of mankind.

V

STAGE LOVE

We are sometimes told (by actresses) that an actress, engaged in a passionate love scene, feels nothing — need feel nothing — that the actress serves simply as a steel tool in the hands of the dramatist. By the same process of reasoning, the foreman of a distillery, ordered by his employer to absorb a quart of whiskey from a sample barrel, feels nothing.

VI

CHARLES FROHMAN

Charles Frohman is dead. It is the American theatre's great misfortune that it lost, through his death, not a producer, but a gentleman. What the American theatre needs is not so much producers as gentlemen.

VII

THE AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT

The trouble with the American playwright is that he is attracted to the drama less by love of the drama than by love of the advance royalty.

VIII

INTROSPECTION

I often say to myself: "Why do you keep up this dramatic criticism? Why do you waste your

time writing of the work of others? If you know so much about what's wrong with their work, why do you not quit talking about it and do their work yourself?" And, so saying, I am often on the point of acting upon the advice when, lo, pops up some manager or playwright who excludes me from his theatre or lambastes me from cart-tail or pamphlet on the ground that I do not know what I am talking about — and so brings me to speculate why these persons do not do the same.

IX

IMPERSONAL CRITICISM

The impersonal critic is a worthless critic. He is as worthless as an impersonal producer or an impersonal playwright. The chief argument against the impersonal critic is, after all, not that he is impersonal, but that he is a critic. [The practice by any such fellow of professional criticism is both ludicrous and objectionable. He is not a critic; he is a reporter. Reporting is the recording of what one has seen and heard. Criticism, the recording of deductions made from what one has seen and heard. The difference is the difference between a Sunday newspaper supplement article on the monkeys in the Bronx Zoo and the Darwinian theory.

X

NO LONG SPEECHES!

When the critical professors busy themselves with giving advice to playwrights, it becomes one of their most toothsome tactics to warn the aforesaid playwrights against the writing into their dialogue of long speeches. Long speeches, say the critical professors, are not dramatic; they are not so vital with dramatic life as are the short sentences; they slacken the action of a play. Etc. The contention of the critical professors rests upon two grounds, both of which are quicksand. Artistically, the long speech is as thoroughly sound as the short speech — viewed however the professors choose. It is, in this direction, as dramatic, as instinct with dramatic life, as quickening of dramatic action (in the best sense) as its runt colleague. Consider, for example, the long speeches of Prospero and others in *The Tempest*, of Hamlet, of Proteus and others in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives*, of the Duke of Vienna in *Measure for Measure*, of two-thirds of the characters in *The Comedy of Errors* and *Much Ado* — in short, consider all of Shakespeare. Then continue and consider a great measure of Shaw and Galsworthy and Brieux and the Russians, Barrie and Rostand and Stephen Phillips and Echegaray, Hauptmann and Synge. So, too, is practically, or commercially, the

long speech as thoroughly sound as the short speech. Have not Shaw, Galsworthy, Brieux, Barrie and Rostand profited sufficiently well despite their practice of the long speech in dramatic dialogue? And what about *The Lady of Lyons* and *East Lynne*?

XI

THERE ARE ONLY SO MANY SITUATIONS

When a critic finds fault with a play so far as to set down his impression that the theme and situations divulging that theme are not new, it is the custom of the anti-critic to rail against the offender by quoting from Georges Polti's *Thirty-six Dramatic Situations* to the effect that Goethe once said, "It is almost impossible in the present day to find a situation which is thoroughly new. Only the manner of looking at it can be new, and the art of treating it and representing it." In the minds of many of our producers and playwrights, the anti-critic, so railing, is hailed as a seer; as, withal, a highly perspicacious fellow. In reality, he is something of a driveller. The old horse-car was one situation. When a man came along with sufficient skill and imagination to sick the nags away and inject electricity into the car, that was entirely another situation. To argue that both were, after all, cars is to argue that a storage battery is charged with oats. The critical objection to most playwrights is not so much that they fail to invent new situations as that they fail to improve

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upon the old ones. Or even to exercise taste in the manipulation of the old situations which they pilfer. The man who stole the Mona Lisa was merely a thief. But what if, having stolen it, he had put it in a bird's-eye maple frame?

XII

LE GOÛT INFLAMMATOIRE

Musical comedy is based on the theory that a leg hath charms to soothe the savage breast. The theory is, obviously, absurd. Hence the success of musical comedy.

XIII

ON CRITICAL DIGNITY

As an analytical commentator on the American theatre and drama, I am now and again hauled upon the carpet by this or that good soul for what is termed my lack of seriousness and critical dignity. As a boy, I recall having once seen a man in top hat and Prince Albert at a country circus.

XIV

VARNISH

"No varnish," said Dickens, "can hide the grain of the wood; the more varnish you put on, the more the grain will express itself." Respectfully commended to those who still cherish the notion that Pinero is a great dramatist.

XV

A BABY'S FIRST LAUGH, ETC.

A celebrated remark of Margaret of France: "I do not kiss the man, but the mouth that has uttered so many charming things." Where a more apt criticism of the work of James M. Barrie?

XVI

ON HACK WORK

When a playwright achieves a popular financial success with a cheap piece of work, I respect his sagacity as a tradesman. When he, achieving such a success, chooses to regard himself of a peg higher than a mere tradesman, when he then chooses to anoint himself as something of an artist, I laugh at him. I, too, in my day, have done hack work — and have duly profited thereby. But I found myself compelled to give up one of my best friends because, one day, the fellow told me in all sincerity that he had just read some of the indubitable trash I was then shedding — and considered it a fine piece of writing.

XVII

HOW TO SEE A PROFESSOR

Professor Richard Burton, head of the Drama League of America, or something, has given birth to a book called *How to See a Play*. I have not read

the good Professor's book and, what is more, I am not going to read the good Professor's book. Any man who can write a full-size book upon the subject of how to see a play would be successful in composing a cyclopedia on the equally complex subject of how to see a good-looking girl. There is but one way to view a play (or a good-looking girl) and that one way may be summed up in a single sentence. A play (or a good-looking girl) should be viewed with the philosophy of a German, the humor of a Frenchman and the heart of a Japanese. So, and only so, does the intelligent spectator sit before a drama.

XVIII

ACTING ON THE HALF SHELL

No great actor ever took his profession seriously. Edmund Kean, whom George Henry Lewes dubs "incomparably the greatest actor I have seen," was half-drunk the night he gave his finest performance of Othello. Rachel's attitude toward her art is well known from the pages of her biography. On one occasion, while in the midst of one of her passionate, tragic performances of Racine, she plucked a rose from her girdle and began eating it. At the height of her career, she was in the habit of rushing through her performances at top speed and appearing in the last scenes already half-dressed for the street, so that she might not lose time in getting back to her current lover. It is said of

Salvini that, when he played Hamlet, he used now and again to take delight in falling upon Horatio's neck with such violence that both he and his colleague were set rolling on the floor.

And Louis James, ridiculous as may seem, when playing engagements in southern cities actually hired an oyster-shucker and lodged him in his dressing-room so that he might, during his performances of Julius Cæsar, be amply supplied with bivalves to slip down the backs of his toga'd associates.

XIX

WORDS SPEAK LOUDER THAN ACTIONS

The question as to the indispensability of action in drama is ever with us. "Drama," says the ice-man, "is not drama unless it has action." "Action," says the milkman, "is the chief requisite of drama." "Without action," says the policeman, "drama ceases to exist." And the simple truth is this: action is essential to plays in proportion to their intrinsic worthlessness.

XX

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

There never lived an actor so proficient in his craft but that he could learn something from watching a child. All children are natural actors — save nine-tenths of those on the stage.

XXI

A CRITICAL OPINION

It is held by many to be impossible for a critic personally to associate with those whose work he is called upon to criticize. Which, of course, is sheer nonsense. It is not impossible. It is merely dull.

XXII

THE NINETY-AND-NINE

The American drama is reared upon a foundation of four F's: fibbery, falsity, flattery and flim-flam. Yet what may one reasonably expect when ninety-nine persons out of every one hundred in an American theatrical audience are of the firm conviction that it always rains on the Fourth of July, that because a dog scratches himself he has fleas, and that burglars do not shave?

XXIII

WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS

The idea, so cherished and widely preached, that it is impossible to figure out what the public wants and will like is, upon investigation, found to be full of holes — as are most such ideas concerning the theatre. Any open-eyed person is able easily to turn the trick. The lament is the blind man's. I have, in a previous paragraph, observed that Bulwer-Lytton knew exactly what the public wanted and

gave it to them, in *The Lady of Lyons*. Shakespeare knew what his public wanted — and *he* gave it to them. His comedy was, to them, “sure-fire,” his dramatic scenes so many certain “punches.” The records of the time prove as much. Shakespeare financed some of his plays with his own money; was his own producer. In view of the results, what better proof of his playwrighting sagacity so far as the public’s taste was concerned? Shaw has repeatedly told the public what it wanted and has then proceeded to write it for them — from *Man and Superman* to *Fanny’s First Play*. George M. Cohan’s local ability to hit the mark is well-known. Euripides knew his public every bit as well as Harry B. Smith knows his. The former wrote seventy-five hits in succession. The latter has written the same hit seventy-five times in succession. It’s all too absurdly simple.

A MIRACLE IN THIRTY-NINTH STREET WEST

I HAVE, in my period, contemplated many a stupefying, many a brain-staggering, theatrical phenomenon. For instance, I have seen — fifteen years ago, I think it was — a play actor who, having to find a passage in some book during the enactment of a drama, did not locate the place immediately he opened the volume. On another memorable occasion — I was quite young at the time — I recall having seen an actress in an ingénue rôle who did not essay to heighten her girlish cunningness by sitting down with one of her feet tucked under her; and on another long-to-be-remembered occasion when, still in kilts, I was privileged a *matinée* in the company of my governess, I recollect having seen a play in which the young actor playing the part of a college man did not delineate the rôle by shaking hands frequently and impulsively with all the other male actors. On the night of February 8, 1891, I beheld an emotional actress play the entire tear-filled, grief-laden climax of a drama on her feet, without once either falling on her knees or rolling around the floor. And from the night of November 16, 1889, I still treasure in memory the view of an actor who, called on by the manuscript to “suffer in si-

lence," did not make to interpret his sad condition by giving periodic vent to a grim, cynical little laugh.

Nor have the miracles been restricted wholly to actors. Although I have small faith that I shall be believed, I yet confess to having once seen a play containing a faithful old servant in which, when the hero lost his fortune, the faithful old servant did not in a pathetic scene urge his master to permit him to help him out with the forty-eight dollars he had saved up. Also have I seen a comedy in which the young lovers, just about to kiss, were not surprised in the act by the unexpected entrance of one of the older characters, the latter thereupon with lovable sympathy giving a significant cough and elaborately busying himself with the papers on the table in the pretense of having not noticed. Also a melodrama in which at no time one of the characters suddenly stood still, motioned his companion for silence, crept on tiptoe to the door, paused a moment and then quickly pulled the door open to surprise an eavesdropper (who, incidentally, nine times out of ten, is never there). And once — it was some dozen years ago as I remember — I was actually witness of a play containing a detective in which at no point in the action were the lights suddenly switched off by some one in order to provoke a thrill.

Ah, yes, mine has been an eventful life. Think of it: on the night of March 14, 1903, I even heard an actor pronounce the word "mademoiselle"

correctly! On the night of September 27, 1896, I heard every word of the part an actor was reciting — and I seated 'way back in the second row! On the night of January 4, 1900, only fifteen years ago, I beheld an actor deliver a line of *seven* words and, during the process of delivery, employ only *four* gestures! At a matinée on April 21, 1907, I saw a play laid in the tenement district in which the heroine's father was not a drunkard and in which the heroine's sister was not low with consumption! On the night of October 2, 1888, I attended a play in which the hero did not bluff the villain by proclaiming, "Meet me here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning and I'll have the money to pay you *every* cent I owe you!" and subsequently, upon being interrogated by his friend as to how he was possibly going to accomplish it, replying, "Damned if I know." At a matinée on September 29, 1894 (I can remember the date well — it was Michaelmas Day), I saw a play in which the fact that the leading female character was supposed to possess "temperament" was not illustrated by the playwright by having the woman one moment vociferously vituperate her maid and the next call her back and present her casually with a handsome bauble from out her jewel case — "Take it, Suzette; 'twill look well on you. There, there, say nothing! Go — leave me alone — you annoy me!" On the night of February 11, 1901 — but enough of adventures with what, however imposing, are after all comparatively no more

than trifling miracles, no more than paltry prodigies, no more than nugatory supernaturalisms.

For, sweeping against these one and all and blowing them before it into oblivion with the mighty wind of ten typhoons, twenty simoons, thirty siroccos, forty hurricanes or one Drama League official, comes a play written by an actor for his own use — and staged for that actor by another actor! — which, nevertheless, from curtain to curtain, fails persistently to disclose any trace of (1) a scene wherein the actor who wrote the play for his own use, single-handed and armed only with a stylish “dress suit,” defies the villain and his jackals to dare so much as *touch* the heroine! — meanwhile emphasizing his perfect coolness by puffing nonchalantly at a cigarette; (2) a series of prefatory scenes wherein all the other characters are made to work up an entrance for the actor who wrote the play for himself by referring to him repeatedly as “that strong, handsome brute” and with such observations as “Well, whatever they may say against him, he’s a *man!*” and such amorous encomiums as “Oh, what would I not give to have one as noble, as generous, as manly as he take me in his big strong arms and protect me from the world, and love me!” or (3) a valet who is made by the actor who wrote the play for himself to help aforesaid actor in and out of his purple velvet smoking jacket, the object being to let the audience know that aforesaid actor is really a gentleman “on and off.”

Pause a moment and reflect. A play of such parentage that has in it not a single touching passage about "mother love"; not a passage indicating the leading actor's perfect familiarity with Biarritz, the placid - Mediterranean - turquoise - under - the - August-skies, and Lord Allonhurst's (with a significant wink) gay yachting parties; not a passage (directed at the man servant) as "*C'est bien, Jenkins, mais aidez-moi plutôt à mettre mon pantalon*" to prove that the actor who devised the play for his personal use is a French scholar! In it — imagine! — no scene wherein the actor, in white silk blouse open at the throat and with sleeves rolled up, poses rapier in hand before the entrance to the Taverne du Lion d'Or and, thrusting the fair Thérèse de Valois behind him, defends her "honor" with his life, by the dim light of the candelabra eventually disarming and putting to rout not only the traitorous Duc ("the best swordsman in all France") but his hirelings as well! In it — think you! — a hero who is not finally discovered to be related, even illegitimately, to Napoleon!!

The miracle? Too Many Cooks, by name. The author and chief interpreter? Mr. Frank Craven. The scene? The Thirty-ninth Street Theatre. Narrating simply, unaffectedly and with a sharp appreciation of the humors resident in the materials, the adventures of a vulgar young lower middle class clerk coincident with building a small house in the suburbs wherein to house his bride-to-be, the piece

is not only suggestive, in several of its major local phases, of the playful viewpoint attaching still to the memory of Charles Hoyt, but, more than this, it attains in recurring flashes of humorous characterization and genial philosophy to the quality of Ade. In its entirety, this little farce comedy is so absurdly incomplex and innocent that, withdrawing from its contemplation, one is at first deluded into a depreciation of its merits, merits that subsequently must present themselves with some considerable force in a day when the contributors to the native theatre are either little more than preposterous pilferers of foreign goods which they seek archly but vainly to infuse with a local vitality or mere virtuosi of original slipslops. This Craven, setting out to write "an American play," unlike the rank and file of his current rivals in this omnipresent and generally unsavory divertissement, refrained from bequeathing to his "American play" the conventional essentials of the countless "American plays" that the proletariat is half-paged into regarding with serious awe — to wit, such distinctively American ingredients as a German ethical viewpoint, a French "punch," an Austro-Hungarian concupiscence and an English butler.

Another thing. Craven's "technique." *Dei gratia*, he has none — at least in the sense which our critical column fillers so lovingly stroke the word. His play folk amble on and off the stage without paying any attention whatever to what technicians would

have us believe is the first law of all human conduct; always, that is, to specify precisely where one is going and why before one leaves the presence of another, and to explain where one has been and why when one makes his reappearance. Nor do his play characters hesitate at doors to deliver themselves of brilliant, cutting repartee, nor do they maneuver intricately in and out of half a dozen exits and entrances such as French windows, stairways, verandas and the like arbitrarily to decorate the action of the play. They seem to realize — with the bare two exits and entrances that Craven has allowed them — that, in actual life and in the actual world, there is probably not more than one room or one houseyard or one what-not in a hundred in which the persons immediately figuring make use of more than one or two means of ingress and egress. Show me the playwright who utilizes from four to six doors or other entrances and exits in his acts and, generally speaking, I will show you a concocter of bad plays.

Do I seem absurdly to ladle out over-praise on the head of the sire of this little play? Well, well, I trust not, for it deserves no so fluent and copious a dose of gravy. Yet if I have been led somewhat rashly to explode too many pinwheels in this Craven's honor, I have as my apology the sudden reaction in me provided by his play against the leaky native twattle that has been abusing our theatrical eyes. When one encounters such a likable reticence, such a genuineness and thoroughly sound derivation

of humor and such a frank, conscious display of bad manners as is to be approached in the play of which speech is here being made, it is privileged the critic to omit reference, in this day and hour of our dramatic famine, to mere defects and flaws. From these the play is not exempt. It is unduly repetitious in its episodes; it is given now and again to the familiar practice of mental Coo and Coddle, the silly sentimentality without which no American-made play seems possible of birth. But, with these faults and its several others, the play (with the novel scenic notion of showing a house in the three stages of building — first, the foundation, then the framework and lastly the finished product) is still instrumental in providing theatregoers with an evening of happy relief from the theatre.

Why, on the other hand, Mr. Augustin MacHugh's play, *What Would You Do?* scored so precipitous a failure in New York, I am at a loss to comprehend. In the first place, it was such a very bad play. Mr. MacHugh, who, before he achieved success with the farce *Officer 666*, was a play actor, was unfortunately unable, judging from the contour of his play, to forget the circumstance as his former colleague Craven had in his own case contrived adroitly to forget it. What the result? Behold the situation so close to the hearts of the Vaughan Glasers of the hinterland stock companies — wife in lover's arms, enter husband! Behold the situation that makes the Corse Paytons leave home —

telephone . . . Stock Exchange . . . Consolidated Preferred down 190 points . . . "My God, I'm ruined!" . . . "What's that? Market recovering? Up 340 points? [Thank God! Saved!!" Behold the dear old scene in which husband "loses control of himself," throws extravagant, pleasure-loving wife to her knees and Then Tells Her She Is No Better Than The Painted Women You See On The Streets! Behold the now celebrated last act, laid in the country—"How wonderful it is out here! It's like a different life, Bob, after the sordidness and misery of the city"—with wife returning penitently at ten to eleven in a Simple Dress. And, pervading all, behold the inevitable *unconscious* evil manners.

Why is it that when all but three of the writers for the American stage set out to deal with characters presumed to be moderately well-bred, the manners they attribute to such characters are disclosed to be on a par with the manners of stable boys and persons of secure social position? To say that the writers fail in portraying good manners through the medium of their characters because they themselves may be ill-bred is vapid argument. Oscar Wilde, a Sousa of proscenium manners, had the personal manners of a fellow in trade; Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whose dramatic characters are models of form, was, so history informs us, possessed of a prime loutishness in personal conduct; and I have heard whispered in the alehouses that Pinero, whose play

characters are ever so thoroughly *en règle* that they aggravate one, not only tucks a serviette under his chin and chases the nomadically inclined French pea which happens to wander from the saucer over the tablecloth, but, in a major way, may be said generally to make up his manners as he goes along.

Having seen many plays, it follows as obvious that I have seen many badly acted plays. What *Would You Do?* was interpreted with so stunning a lack of histrionic ability on the part of the mummors engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with its parts of speech that the applause for the actors on the opening night was deafening. What is applause? Crossing the sea last summer in a ship numbering in its passenger list forty-six recognized music lovers — persons well known in New York for their intelligent devotion to opera, symphony concerts, recitals — I had reason to reflect. Each night, in the large saloon on the promenade deck, these forty-six gathered with the rest of the ship to listen to one of the new instruments that so wonderfully, so uncannily, reproduces to the most humble detail the interpretation of rare musical compositions by the best pianists of the current era. It has been agreed and is agreed — and it has been *proved* — by able critics that were one of the famous pianists to seat himself behind a screen and play, and that were subsequently the instrument to reproduce his playing behind another screen, the listener would be unable to determine which of the performances had

come from the human hand, which from the mechanical. This night, the forty-six listened to Paderewski — or, more accurately, to the reproduced Paderewski. The forty-six were silent, enraptured, enthralled. The playing stopped. There was not a handclap from the forty-six. Nor a handclap, a murmur, a sound, for that matter, from any one else. And then it was that I came to wonder if applause, after all, is not ever less a tribute to work well done than a sop to the empty personal vanity and jackassish conceit of public performers?

OUR THOUGHTFUL DRAMA

THE late Mr. Charles Klein's final contribution to our national drama of thought bore the title *The Money Makers*, and fired the bewildering, revolutionary philosophy that wealth is acquired only by foul practice, that it brings with it awful misery and unhappiness, and that an economic desideratum beseeches its immediate return to the sources whence it has been illegally derived. This, the culmination of our native mental drama, *le grand climax*, the Krupp discharge.

It must be at once obvious, however, that so stupendous a coup of reasoning could be born only out of a slow and painfully plodding process of years of American theatrical thought. Great philosophies are not of instantaneous creation. A complete and careful survey of our drama of ideas, precursor of the Klein masterpiece, reveals the following ripening contributions on the part of our principal intellectual playwriting giants to the cyclopedia of worldly intelligence and information:

The Witching Hour (Thomas) — (1) Although a jury is locked securely in a court chamber, it may be influenced telepathically by what persons hundreds of miles away are at the moment thinking;

and (2) A madman about to fire a revolver may be restrained in a twinkling by a mere hypnotic glance of the eye.

The Harvest Moon (Thomas) — (1) If you remind a young girl that her mother divorced her father and married another man it will cause the young girl in time to become a prostitute; (2) Different colors are suited to different emotional effects (see Herbert Spencer, 50 years before); and (3) Moonlight makes one feel sentimental.

The Lion and the Mouse (Klein) — The commercial mind, will and strategy of a great organizer of trusts may be completely and quickly changed and upset by the arguments of a young woman.

The Servant In the House (Kennedy) — (1) It is our duty to believe in the brotherhood of man; and (2) The socialism of the average socialist of to-day is merely "the fighting with his class against all the other classes."

The Terrible Meek (Kennedy) — Duty is one thing, mercy is another thing.

The Next of Kin (Klein) — A corrupt lawyer can gain control of every court in New York.

The Dawn of a To-morrow (Burnett) — Mental suggestion is a sure cure for all human ills. (See also The Witching Hour and Harvest Moon.)

As a Man Thinks (Thomas) — (1) See The Dawn of a To-morrow; (2) An estranged couple having a child is always reunited on Christmas eve by that child.

Bought and Paid For (Broadhurst) — (1) Poor girls who marry rich men have an awful time of it because (2) rich men drink heavily and proceed to enact big scenes from Brieux.

Mere Man (Thomas) — Woman is dependent upon man.

The Model (Thomas) — Art has a mental as well as a physical appeal.

The Law of the Land (Broadhurst) — If a man treats his adulterous wife harshly it is only simple justice that she shoot him dead on the spot.

The City (Fitch) — A large city corrupts a man.

The Third Degree (Klein) — The police often practice devious means to get a confession from a malefactor.

The Return of Peter Grimm (Belasco) — (1) A man who believes certain things during life is actually able to change his beliefs after death, and (2) project these new beliefs into the "subconscious memories" of living persons.

The Case of Becky (Locke) — (1) Absolute dual personality is a fact; and (2) a man may be hypnotized against his will (see also *The Witching Hour*).

The Lure (Scarborough) — (1) The poor, fatherless girls of New York City are at the mercy of white slavers; and (2) it is the custom of bawdy houses that all male visitors be shown into the same room.

A Man's World (Crothers) — A woman who

loves a man deeply will not marry him if she learns that he is not a virgin.

The Great Divide (Moody) — (1) When the old Puritan formalism of conscience and pragmatism come into conflict, there is a struggle; and (2) this struggle always has a comfortable termination.

Ben Hur (Wallace) — (1) A white spotlight may bring about a spiritual awakening; and (2) a chariot race is at once a spiritual spectacle and a powerful sermon.

There, in brief, is the grand sum total of the wisdom of the American drama to date! And there the profound womb out of which the climacteric Klein none-such was given its being.

THE RULES OF THE CURRENT PLAYS

THERE has been great discourse of late in the chess parlors as to whether or no playwriting can be taught.

The eminent post-prandial Cicero, Professor W. T. Price, that proud pasha of the yeas, discreetly forgetting that, in collaboration, he taught Roland Burnham Molineux to build what was indubitably one of the very worst specimens of playwriting revealed in recent years, has been hot at it splitting a lung for the defense. The good Harvardder, George P. Baker, amiable exhorter of the incipient Sardous of the species, glowing with the triumphant incubation of a Sheldon, has been quoted with fire and gusto by the faithful, that copious bund that somehow sees Baker in Romance in place of Hauptmann, Baker in The Princess Zim Zim in place of Maurice Donnay, Baker in The Boss in place of George Ohnet — Baker generally in place of Bernstein. Nor have the mustaphas of the nay been less kings of the storm. The Reverend Dr. Howard has laid about him with a grievous cudgel, flaying the dust into the playwriting pilgrims' eyes with aplomb and bidding them desist in their futile quest of the muse. Other playwrights, applauded by theatrical personages of more or less relevance, have

balanced the nugatory feather on their noses and performed nobly. And various newspaper critical gentlemen, bursting with sagacity, have interrupted our regular Sabbath devotions at the photographs of the physiology of Kay Laurell with space-consuming arguments pro and con.

Now, this question as to whether or not it may be possible to teach playwriting to some of our most popular American dramatists and other beginners — so far as we are here concerned — may continue to remain an open one. What engages our attention at the moment is the correlative, but seemingly overlooked, fact that, given a person sufficiently deficient in ideas, it should be a very simple matter to instruct him in the technique of theatrical, critical and commercial success whether he knows anything about playwriting or not. That is to say, the rules for achieving the sale of a play and for achieving the subsequent plaudits of press and public would seem in themselves to be so absurdly incomplex that it is a legitimate subject for amazement that notice has not more often been called to them. From time to time I have directed attention to the divers *recipés* in the cookbook of theatrical prosperity as such *recipés* were discovered for me by the plays of the day.

Thus, I have pointed out that a play in which a young city ne'er-do-well goes to live in the country and is made morally and financially whole again through the atmosphere and inspiration of the vil-

lage is as certain of success as a play in which the proud heroine eventually discovers that "love has been born in her" for the cave man who has beaten her up in the second act. Thus, I have pointed out that it is like the proverbial taking of candy from children to give the public and critics a play in which all Jews are proved to be angels. There is always room, too, for a play in which old age is shown sentimentally to be a wonderful thing (the older critics always succumb to this one), and for a play that proves beyond all doubt how much a mother loves her child. The latter play cannot possibly fail if it contains a scene in which the mother is on trial in a courtroom. A farce in which a character hides in a chest after he has suddenly extinguished all the lights in the room and in which the hero wears a Norfolk jacket with a revolver conspicuously observable in one of the pockets is so certain of good fortune on the face of it that it does not even have to be written, or rewritten, by George Cohan — and as for any play in which the chief rascal and all the other lesser rascals are gradually reformed through the influence of a Good Woman. . . .

So, also, in the register of established sure-things do we find the so-called religious play in which a group of venomous, warring, cheating, pessimistic humans slowly melt into so many cherubs before the calm and kindness and comforting words of a mysterious character only vaguely identified in programme and dialogue. And so, too, the play in

which a father and mother, estranged from each other, are ultimately reunited by their child, preferably, as some one has remarked, a little daughter in her nightie. But safest of all these artless dodges is a decrepit, out-of-date, ingenuous play in which the dialogue has been altered from "Yes, Margaret is a pretty girl, the best-looker in Detroit," to "Aye, Mag's a bonnie lass, the bonniest wha lives i' all Drumtochty."

Enter, therefore, Kitty Mackay, by Catherine Chisholm Cushing.

Most American playwrights may soon or late be divided into five classes: first, those who write Sardou's *Divorçons*; second, those who write *Sis Hopkins*; third, those who write *Brieux's* plays; fourth, those who write *Sudermann's Magda*; and fifth, those who write *Cinderella*. In the latter catalogue we find *Miss Cushing*. Her *Kitty MacKay* is merely *Cinderella* written thus: *Cîndérèllâ* — which is to say, *Cinderella* with an accent. That *Miss Cushing* is one of my regular readers and deepest admirers I cannot but believe after an inspection of her play, for to insure its success she has perspicaciously utilized not merely one of my frequently repeated rules, but as many as three or four. Thus, what she has done to achieve the critical and public eulogies is merely to adopt my Rule XVIII (originally published in March, 1909) that "Success may always be gained in the theatre with the story of the girl who is ill-treated by her foster par-

ents and who, no matter what her nationality, finally marries a wealthy young Englishman (who has been coveted by her stepsister) and then marches straight back home and, with much sweetness of nature, forgives those who abused her." And with my Rule XVIII, my Rule XXIV (originally published in January, 1910) that "A good *genre* play may be obtained by laying the scene of any particularly bad play in an Irish, Scotch or Welsh village or British provincial town;" my Rule XXXIX (August, 1910) that "Dialogue, however stale and stupid, may be given the semblance of freshness and wit by translating it into any form of dialect, including the Scandinavian;" and my Rule XLI (April, 1911) that "The device of having the babies changed at birth, now beginning to be looked on with some disfavor in musical comedy libretti, should in due time therefore be excellent material for the popular legitimate drama."

Were it not for the circumstance that our patrons and appraisers of dramatic art are so consistently confused and led astray at the first smell of dialect and the sight of some scenery picturing a village somewhere in the British Isles, I should hesitate to call out the artillery against so otherwise harmless and innocent an exhibit as this little play of Miss Cushing's. But recall the dumfounded awe with which the "Irish school of drama" was greeted a few years ago, the elaborate hysteria and befuddled gropings in the contemplation of the plays presented

in the name of that "school." Recall the critical epilepsies, the general panic of the dramatic barristers, the great debates in the ale houses! Recall the eureka's and golden opinions and benisons that were sounded in the pantheon when Githa Sowerby rewrote Mirabeau with a British provincial accent and when the late Stanley Houghton rewrote Max Dreyer and David Graham Phillips with inland inflections. Ah, me, what a hocus-pocus is on the world! Why this confounding of dialect with characterization, why this confounding of scenery with "drama of the soil"? The Scottish characters of Kitty MacKay are merely the conventional marionettes of the theatre dressed in kilts; their loudly acclaimed "wit" (saving one legitimately humorous episode having to do with a revision of the Bible) is intrinsically nothing more than a substitution in the obvious American proscenium badinage of "naethin'" for "nothing," "aboot" for "about," "dinna ken" for "do not know," *u.s.w.*—the old trick of the club comic who gets a better effect out of a story by telling it in the negro tongue or in German dialect. In view of the reception of Kitty MacKay, why wouldn't it be a profitable enterprise for some needy producer to present a version of some particularly out-of-date play such, for example, as "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," with Aubrey made Angus MacTanqueray and Paula made Polly, and with the dialogue altered thus:

ANGUS: Is naethin' ever serious wi' ye, Poll?

POLLY: . . . We canna talk aboot that now, Angus.

ANGUS: But now, lass, life wi' be different wi' ye, wi' it not, m' bonnie one?

POLLY: Aye, an' it wi', Angus. But, mind ye, Angus, a'ways to keep me wi' ye and happy.

ANGUS: I wi' try, Polly.

POLLY: I canna endure more misery, Angus — I am a lassie wh' canna endure it!

ANGUS: I dinna want ye to, lass.

POLLY: Then take me wi' ye, Angus, awa' i' the Highlands, i' a wee sma' place ca'd Willowmere, i' Surrey. Oh, I'm sae awfu' happy, Angus, sae awfu' happy!

I give the suggestion gratis, but with one reservation. Whoever accepts it and produces the play must agree not to send me tickets to see it.

ON FIRST-NIGHTERS

By way of indicating to the majority of our theatrical managers that they have only themselves to blame for the spurious circumstances attaching to the metropolitan inaugurations of their new productions — in other words, the studied frigidity and (more often) the senseless and profitless hysteria of their invited first-night audiences and regular guard — I recently persuaded an acquaintance, a learned and intelligent surgeon (incidentally, one of the greatest in the United States), to write to several managements, enclosing his cheques and asking that two seats subsequently be reserved for him for each of the opening performances of the current season.

In due time the surgeon received replies (returning his cheques) stating that "it was impossible to accede to his request because the first-night houses were already made up from their regular first-night lists." It was postscripted that the surgeon might, if he desired, try to buy seats at the box-offices for such opening performances as he would wish to see; it being added that sometimes a few seats were "left over" and put on sale for the benefit of the public at large.

Now, gentlemen of the jury, what is this New York first-night audience that renders its verdict

for or against a new play? What is the caliber of its intelligence, what the nature of its critical acumen? The professional reviewers I except from the present catalogue: I have neither space nor inclination to make an excursion to-day into their talents. But the general audience, what of that? Is it the sort of gathering that is properly constituted to pass on a dramatic production? Is it the sort of congregation that is capable of assisting the managers in any tonic way? Does it help with its applause? Does it help with its lack of applause? Does it — can it — exercise judgment of any respectable kind (adverse appraisal or favorable appraisal) in any manner beneficial to these very managers who seduce themselves year by year into the hallucination that it does and can.

I will not finally say. But, after an attendance upon some seventy-five successive *premières*, I may best suggest to the forgetful managers the scholarly aspect of their typical New York first-night audience by citing, in a general, albeit sufficiently illustrative way, the personnel of such an audience as it has, on each of the seventy-five nights in point, assaulted my vision. Here, then, is an approximate register of the representative New York first-night audience:

38 Actresses out of work.

31 Actors out of work.

3 Wine agents.

8 Song Writers.

42 Kept Women.

124 ANOTHER BOOK ON THE THEATRE

- 42 Keepers (chiefly stockbrokers, peafowlish tradesmen and bogus *roués*).
 - 1 Corset manufacturer.
 - 2 Scene painters.
- 14 Members of leading woman's family or friends.
- 10 Members of leading man's family, or friends.
- 50 Friends or members of families of other actors in the company.
 - 1 Wife of orchestra leader.
- 60 "Gentlemen friends" of the chorus girls (if a musical comedy *première*).
 - 2 Stenographers in producer's office.
 - 5 Celebrated American playwrights.
 - 4 Programme, billboard, etc., advertising men.
 - 2 Ticket Speculators.
 - 2 Firemen.
 - 3 Newspaper illustrators.
 - 2 Dressmakers.
 - 2 Milliners.
 - 1 Wigmaker.
 - 2 Representatives Orange Costume Company.
 - 1 Representative Russell Uniform Company.
- 25 Song Pushers (if a musical comedy opening).
 - 4 Play-brokers.
 - 3 Other managers.
 - 2 Theatrical doctors.
 - 9 Lawyers (if a Belasco *première*).
 - 1 Hotel manager.
 - 2 Ex-waiters, now restaurant managers.
 - 6 Chorus-girls-de-luxe.
 - 3 Librettists.
 - 2 Newspaper "society" editors.

- 4 Vaudeville booking agents.
- 8 Members producing manager's staff.
- 1 Producing manager's valet.
- 3 Producing manager's lady-friends.
- 3 Manager's friends' friends.
- 1 Theatrical photographer.
- 1 Florist (come to see how his flowers look in the lobby).
- 3 Press-agents-at-large.
- 3 Producing manager's backers.
- 2 Sunday newspaper supplement humorists.
- 2 Restaurant-cabaretists.
- 6 Audience-scouts (regulars who attend openings for the purpose of indulging in *entr'acte* conversation with actresses and other girls present whom they know — or desire to meet).

There, in the aggregate, is the New York first-night audience!

Were I a manager or a playwright, I should prefer to inaugurate my piece on the second night.

PARLOUS VIEWS FRANÇAIS

THE current theatrical taste of a community is to be gauged most accurately not through its dramas but through its music halls.

Although this mischievous view has never, to my knowledge, been bestowed upon a logically rheumatic populace, it yet persists as one of those perfectly veracious and patent statements for which, alas, no proof, no reason, may be assigned in satisfying terms of black and white. Like the curious circumstance, for instance, that a lonely far-off whistle-wail of some steamship or locomotive invariably accents for us the sentiment of a melody we hear played in the twilight on some neighboring piano. Or the fact that the most beautiful of musical instruments, the violin, has the ugliest physical aspect. Or the fact that the first impulse that comes to a woman who believes she can write is a longing to get out a book on Lafcadio Hearn. Or the facts that no man can be a philosopher of any order unless he possesses a keen understanding of the subtleties of physiology; that no one ever gets drunk on the intrinsically intoxicating chianti of the Fattoria di Vico d'Arbia; and that every mother's son of you, in reading Well's New Machiavelli, skipped the excellent section dealing with British politics.

The relationship existing between the Parisian music hall and the composite taste of the boulevards I may describe as a sort of *double entente cordiale*. This, the true spirit, the true taste of theatrical Paris, at least as it comes to me at the moment. And in my estimate I have not overlooked the Comédie Française, the Gymnase and the sterner domiciles where now and again one may be spectator at the dramatization of some other triangle than the familiar one composed of Him, Her and the Bed; nor the Variétés, the Guignol and the bolder, more unconventional inns where life is often treated as just one bridal night after another. Your critic who sagely makes assurance that the Frenchman vastly prefers that a spade be called a spade in his playhouse would seem to be somewhat mope-eyed. The fact that here and there in the Gallic theatres a spade is called a spade does not argue that the Frenchman fancies such a designation above every other any more than the fact that a real Frenchman once went into Maxim's argues that Maxim's is a French restaurant.

Just as the mental picture of Paris that Americans conjure up consists principally of a girl dancing on top of a table at two o'clock in the morning (a sheer delusion and impossibility inasmuch as by two o'clock in the morning that girl is under the table), so does the mental picture of dramatic Paris seem to consist chiefly of a hotel, like the celebrated one in Atlantic City, where, so the word goes, they used to ring a

bell at seven o'clock every morning to warn the guests that it was time to go back to their own rooms. As a result of this insistent conception, the voyager who visits the majority of Gallic playhouses finds himself sorely perplexed. He observes that, in the greater number of cases, instead of calling a spade a spade, the French stage more often calls a spade "*la profession d'un Italien*" or something of the sort, which, as he does not understand French, the voyager guesses must mean something about chemises or nightgowns or *at least* silk stockings. So when he returns to his native soil, the voyager, upon being asked the nature of the plays he saw, winks his eye and smiles one of those condescending Cook's tourist smiles that, translated into Esperanto, signifies: "I'd like to tell you, but really you've gotta understand French to appreciate such things." Translated into plain, everyday American, you may lay your last louis that in nine cases out of ten all the Gaulish enlightenment that is back of the voyager smile is an acquaintance with a suggestive postcard purchased in front of the Café de la Paix in a manner that he was ingenuously made to believe was *sub rosa*.

I regret that I must take this parlous view of the French theatrical taste. For positive I am that these remarks would achieve the wider favor of my readers were they to take the old conventional American-critic-abroad tone to the effect that the three Parisian dramatic unities must ever be time,

place and counterpane. "In every French play a bed occupies the principal position on the stage" is one of the juiciest cuds in the critical mouth, although whenever I run across it I know that its inditer is just the sort of theatrical commentator who, in writing about a musical comedy, will every once in a while say that "the performers seemed to be enjoying themselves in their work, which made the entertainment doubly enjoyable to the audience."

For then he was inspired, and from him came,
As from the Pythian's mystic cave of yore,
Those oracles which set the world in flame,
Nor ceased to burn till kingdoms were no more:
Did he not this for France, which lay before
Bow'd to the inborn tyranny of years? . . .

Do not misjudge me! I am not hazarding the contention that the French theatrical taste is becoming wholly white and virtuous. I insist merely that *double entente* would appear to be supplanting *single entente* in popularity, and that instead of the old-fashioned bedstead the taste now runs to something that seems to be a bookcase but that, when pulled down, is really the old bed after all. This *double entente*, of course, is not always quite so refined, so delicate, as that of La Cruche Cassée, but it is *double entente* — and that is something. The bed is dead! Long live the davenport!!

ON ZANGWILL

MR. ZANGWILL is at it again. This time it is called Plaster Saints. Zangwill is the William Jennings Bryan of the drama. Let him have a basically sound idea, and in ten minutes he will have contrived to talk that basically sound idea into a basically unsound idea. The virtuosity of the man in this direction is amazing. With Zangwill, every idea is a Lucrece. No idea ever escapes his hands with its virtue still intact. And even may we imagine that an idea might so elude his amorous befuddlement, we still cannot persuade ourselves to believe that the man's apparently unconquerable bad manners would not work as complete havoc with the idea. I am getting very tired of employing the word "platitude," but Zangwill is platitude's John Philip Sousa. He waves his baton and an orchestra of platitudes begins to ragtime. Recall The Melting Pot, that Zeppelin of molasses and stupid blasphemy of common sense — with its valid basic idea shot to pieces. Recall The Next Religion and The War God. It has been truly said of Mr. Zangwill that he is an intelligent and enthusiastic public character who, as soon as he enters the theatre, at once achieves the limit of vulgarity and silliness.

Plaster Saints is a saturnalia of rhetoric which

quickly sucks its theme down into oblivion. This theme is of the unreasonable attitude of a world which expects its clergy to be immaculate, sexually negative and yet as understanding of sin as were the lusty Saints Augustine and Francis. The playwright zangs away at his thesis with such yelling and florid mental gesticulation that the din becomes so deafening the lay auditor believes himself unable to hear Mr. Zangwill think. [The auditor who has been there before, of course appreciates that Mr. Zangwill never thinks, and so merely slides down onto his shoulder blades and permits the volume of sound to thunder him to sleep. In this essay on Noise, Schopenhauer mentions an epistle by the celebrated painter Bronzino, entitled *De Romori a Messer Luca Martini*, which gives a detailed description of the tortures to which persons are put by the various noises of a small Italian town. The philosopher recommends it, if I remember rightly, as the best argument against noise that he can bring to mind. Schopenhauer died in 1838. Zangwill was born in 1864.

Zangwill's leading character is a provincial clergyman of Nonconformist denomination who has a baby by his secretary Felicia. The gentleman's wife in due time hears of the scandal, and insists that it is her spouse's duty to divorce her and marry the other woman. Also that it is his duty (a Zangwill play is always full of "duty" of one sort or another) to make a public confession. The end?

Of course, news comes that a "rising young novelist" has married Felicia. Whenever a married man ruins a young lady in the drama it is an even break that his perplexity will ultimately be solved through one of these "rising young novelists." Why it should be thus, I do not seem to know; but on the stage rising young novelists are generally depicted as Act IV mouthpieces of "Let's say no more about it, dear. What happened, happened a long time ago — before you knew me. I love you. It doesn't matter." In real life, of course, sentimental, which is to say rising, young novelists are very often given to just this sort of thing; therefore we have the right to expect of a playwright that he use a little invention. As Shaw said in his address to the students at Oxford, "It is silly to urge that drama should reflect life. Life is not sufficiently dramatic to make drama. If it were, what would be the use of drama?" With Felicia and the baby satisfactorily disposed of, the pastor emerges as "one who, tempered by the winds of sin, will devote himself sympathetically to the uplift of mankind" or something to that usual effect.

I may or may not have observed that, in a vague way, there might be detected a soupçon of something interesting in the play's theme before Zangwill began fooling with it. In a somewhat relevant way, may I wonder why it is that, in the United States particularly, continence and a professional talent are so widely believed to be impossible of disassocia-

tion? In other words, why is it that so many native noodles believe that the talented man who dallies with the ladies cannot be really so talented as the untalented man who does not?

PLAYS THAT SPEAK VOLUMES

WHY do so many dramatized romantic novels fail of success in the theatre?

Let us consider.

It is imagination that makes the world go round.

Imagination creates poets, generals, democrats, investors in gold mines and appendicitis. It often causes the poor actually to be contented and to imagine themselves to be quite so good as the rich. It is the mother of art, the father of patriotism. It is the charter of the doll-founded toy town of Nüremberg. It is the architect of the marriage altar, and, crafty dog, it has invested millions of dollars to huge profit in the manufacture of cradles. Imagination gave birth to a Cleopatra and death to those who conjured up its mirages of passion when her gilded barge prowed toward them. It grafts rosemary on what is often really nothing more than an old geranium stalk. It orchestrates music so that music "creates for one a past of which one has been ignorant, and fills one with a sense of sorrows that have been hidden from one's tears." It discovers the poles; it makes beer intoxicating. And — it makes novels pay.

Take imagination from the common people, that is, take from them what small imagination they pos-

sess, and Bobbs-Merrill would go into the picture postcard printing business; Robert W. Chambers would have to make his last winter's suit do; McCutcheon would still be covering fires in Chicago; Bennett would have to buy his own meals when he came to America; and Phillips Oppenheim, with all other capitalizers of the yeoman imagination, would be writing special articles for the trade papers.

If there is one combination of things above all others that the hardworking thirty-five-dollar-a-week free-holder cherishes, it is to lay hold on a fiction book once the factory whistle has bade him *au 'voir* until the morrow — it is to deposit himself in his favorite armchair, and, this done, to look into that book and imagine himself in the place of the stalwart former Yale right half-back, now become commander-in-chief of the army of the beautiful Bullkon princess with no less a personage than the beautiful princess herself bringing him his grapefruit in the mornings. He loves to imagine himself in Clay's place, leaning over the rail of the coast steamer with the gorgeous Hope Langham's soft brown wind-blown hair tickling his nose, and he loves to hear himself say to her: "There to the north is Paris, with London only eight hours away. If you look very closely you can see the thousands of hansom cab lamps flashing across the asphalt, and the open theatres, and the fairy lamps in the gardens back of the houses in Mayfair, where they are giving dances in your honor, in honor of the beautiful American

bride, et cetera." He loves to imagine himself the "clean, straight-limbed" Rassendyll, standing in the presence of the sun-bathed towers of Zenda with the music of Ruritania ringing in his ears and with the violet eyes of Flavia melting in his own. He loves for the nonce to forget that he has a calldown coming to him unless he gets to the office at half past eight every morning, to forget that little Henry has the measles, that the cook is going to leave on Saturday, that his wife has a red nose and dirty fingernails. He opens his Tabard Inn literature and projects himself into another and lovelier world. It is he, not Androvsky, who goes forth with the handsome Domini to seek "freedom, a wide horizon, the great winds, the great sun, the terrible spaces, the glowing, shimmering radiance, the hot, entrancing noons and bloomy, purple nights of Africa."

And when *he* happens to be a *she*, it is the same. She, too, loves to forget that, unless she gets to her manicure table to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, the head barber will give her a black look. She loves to forget that she has to eat roast-beef hash four times a week and egg sandwiches the other three instead of dallying carelessly over narcissus salad on a Sèvres plate with lotus blossom tea in a Cloisonné cup on the side. For two reading hours she imagines herself to be Clorinda Wildairs, Peg Woffington, Glory Quayle, Lygia, some vague, wondrous, beauteous, fascinating heroine — and then — and then he and she go to the theatre.

With the rise of the curtain, their dreams are shattered. Another man than himself is in Clay's boots; another woman than herself stands beside him straining over the ship's rail to see "the harbor lights of Bizerta and the terraces of Algiers shining like a café chantant in the night." And the man doesn't look like Clay at all! Imagination hid the bald spot that now also shines like a café chantant in the night on the actor's dome. Imagination did not take into account the lusty gold tooth that flashes like Scotland Light whenever the actor opens his mouth to speak. Imagination certainly did not picture Miss Langham to be the dumpy brunette with false puffs and a squint eye that the stage now reveals her to be. And here, my friends, you have it — you have the chief reason why such book fiction cannot, save in rare and isolated instances, be transferred favorably into the house of Thespis! Imagination is the forbidding censor. And nature is the censor's sister. I can think of two, maybe three, players who, correctly assigned, may look and indeed *have* looked the Gibsoned rôles of best-sellerdom on the boards, but I can think of no more. And correlatively I can think of only two, maybe three dramatized romantic novels that in all these many years have been satisfactory by this token to my eyes and ears.

ON J. K. JEROME

EVERY once in so often some playwright addresses himself to achieve again the spirit and romance of Meyer-Förster's *Alt Heidelberg*, and every once in so often the tilter comes unhorsed from the tourney. The latest gentleman to be unseated is Mr. Jerome K. Jerome, whose play, *The Great Gamble*, met the eye at the Haymarket in London. Imagine Brown of Harvard written by J. M. Barrie and Henry Arthur Jones in collaboration, and then imagine a criticism of such a play written by Brander Matthews for the theatrical department of one of our popular uplift magazines, and you will have, in your conception of the *criticism*, an electrically accurate idea of Mr. Jerome's play. It is an odd circumstance that most writers for the theatre who essay to translate into drama the reminiscent spirit of youth and youth's bygone loves and dreams in a university atmosphere think entirely to accomplish their end with student songs at periodic intervals off left, with more or less jocose allusions on the part of the returned oldsters to one another's bald spots, increasing avoirdupois and rheumatism, and with sentimental reflections bearing upon "you remember, the one with the golden hair and blue eyes; Kathie — wasn't that her name?" . . . "Ah, yes, ah, yes,

I remember. Poor dear little Kathie, I wonder what has become of her? (*sadly*) But such is life; such — is — life!”

What is Jerome's trouble? When not writing for the stage, as spontaneously comic and clear-eyed a fellow as one might meet at the round table; when writing for the stage, a clergyman of the pearly tear, a packer of lard, a Charles Rann Kennedy with one foot on the brass rail. What a pity. Jerome has in him wit and humor; he can toy aptly and adroitly with the King's English; and both imagination and fancy are in some measure his portion. Has the stage (Lorelei of so many modern talented writers) wrecked him on its miraged rocks of royalties?

Even when Jerome fails, however, he does not fail entirely. Thus, for example, the first five and last five minutes of *The Great Gamble* possess considerable charm. The scene, an ancient grove at dawn in the purlieus of Heidelberg, deserted, still. Through the trees and shrubbery which half conceal a marble statue of Venus, one hears, very faintly — almost doesn't hear — a soft piping of some once familiar but somehow now forgotten melody. The song of love. Young Robin, returning to Heidelberg, hears it as again he meets the pretty little Elsa, his sweetheart of university years ago — and the pretty little Elsa hears it too. Then comes a time of misunderstanding, of unhappiness, of separation — and the melody dies away. Moonlight eventually silvers the grove, and the dejected young fel-

low makes to leave behind him forever Heidelberg and its days of dear youth and Elsa. With him, ready to go back to their drabber lives in the world beyond the grove, are several students of other times, now grown gray and old.

Suddenly the pipes are heard again, faintly whispering among the leaves. Robin steps back from the departing group and listens. "Hurry," calls one of the old fellows to him. "Hurry!" But Robin stands still. "Do you hear?" he asks. "Hear?" grumbles the ancient; "Hear what?" And then — to his old cronies: "Do *you* hear anything?" No, they hear nothing. And they prepare to take the strangely acting youngster by the arm and lead him with them. When — "Leave him," says the old Colonel tenderly; "he hears it just as we used to hear it when we were his age. We can't hear it any more, we old boys, but it's singing there among the trees just the same as always." And presently the curtain falls. Thus, too, for example, a trace of the old Jerome wit in the retort of a cross-examined man who has run away for an absurd platonic junket on the Continent with his best friend's wife, to the question as to whether they had, at the various hotels at which they had stopped, taken separate rooms: "Yes, where it didn't excite vulgar comment."

Let Jerome write what tiresome plays he will (ten minutes of charm and one gay joke do not constitute an engaging two and one-half hours), yet there re-

mains still about his work one encouraging and winning quality. Let him, as in *The Great Gamble* (the "great gamble" is marriage, according to this vicious anti-platitudinarian!), give us a mother with a "past" (a Wilson Barrett kind of past, with repentance that closes its eyes, shudders and grasps at tables, as one of the British boo-bund has phrased it), and such like persistent and undismayed rubbish, and still there remains something soothing about his labors. I speak of the man's admirably cool snobbery in the matter of tried and true — and so often correspondingly tedious — dramatic technique. Jerome writes his plays with all the spontaneous bounce of the fresh-minded, clean-eared, progressive amateur. They have that most excellent and vivid form which the professors name formlessness. They are alive with the unreasonable, irrational movement of life. In them, nothing of that precisely elegant, elaborately exact (and now so futile, so ridiculous) minuet movement clung to by the poor little Bernsteins and Michael Mortons of the theatre. Too bad Jerome has not ideas to put into his pleasurable lack of technique. In general, give me a so-called technically unpolished, amateurishly built play like Chesterton's *Magic*, or give me a fresh, new playwright like Robert Elson with the idea he brought out in a so-called technically amateurish manner in his *Account Rendered*, or give me a man with fun and notions like Karl Ettlinger, technique or no technique, and a hundred de Croissets are yours.

ON VAUDEVILLE

vaudeville (vo-duh-vil) *n.* [German. *Wo* (where) + *der* (is the) + *Will* (sense)?] — The science of getting money for remarking: "Are you a Democrat?" "No, I'm a Baptist."

It has been said that all men may be divided into two classes: Those who like vaudeville and those who can stand it when they're drunk. It has also been said that any one can succeed in vaudeville, granted he will memorize two things: (1) Have-you-been-traveling-yes-I-came-clean-from-Pittsburgh-nobody-ever-comes-clean-from-Pittsburgh; and (2) What-are-those-two-red-and-green-lights-about-a-mile-off-starboard-it-must-be-a-drug-store. The late Mr. Frederick Wyckoff, one practiced in the field whereof he spoke, was wont to contend that success in vaudeville is to be achieved even more easily than this, that it involves a certain amount of memory, of retentive power, not to forget these two somewhat elaborate jokes. All one has to do to be a big winner in vaudeville, observed this authority, is: (1) To have the drummer put in an extra beat with the cymbals, and then glare at him; and, (2) To use an expression which ends with the query, "Did he not?" And then reply, "He did not."

Forty years ago, in my childhood days, I worked out a guide to vaudeville success which would seem to be as accurate to-day as it was then. In this guide a roar of laughter on the part of vaudeville audiences was guaranteed on each of the following occasions:

1. When a comedian takes hold of his coat-tail, walks with a mincing step, and speaks in a falsetto voice.
2. When a German comedian casually opens his coat and discloses a green vest.
3. When a comedy acrobat falls down repeatedly.
4. When a performer asks the orchestra leader if he's married.
5. When a performer starts to sit down and the drummer pulls a resined piece of cord and the performer pretends to think his trousers have ripped.
6. When a tramp comedian turns around and discloses a purple patch or some pearl buttons or a target sewed on the seat of pants.
7. When a juggler doing a trick remarks in the third person: "Isn't he clever!"
8. When one member of a conversational team, speaking vehemently to the other, accompanies his words with a salivary spray, whereupon his partner observes: "It's raining!"
9. When one German comedian strokes the other's chin whiskers and jocosely refers to the latter as "spinach."
10. When the comedian member of a troupe of instrumentalists interrupts one of the melodies being rendered by sounding a sour note on his trombone.
11. When the bass member of a quartet sings a very low

note and the other three members stop singing and look at him in feigned surprise and awe.

12. When the clown of a team of acrobats poises himself to do a presumably difficult feat, and then, suddenly changing his mind, walks away without doing it.

Thus, too, applause was and still is always to be won in vaudeville by throwing the pictures of Washington, Lincoln, and the current chief executive on the screen just before the moving pictures. Also with the picture of any prizefighter save Mr. Jack Johnson. Applause similarly was and still is sure to follow a laudatory reference to the local baseball team, the bow of an acrobat after he has done his trick, a scenic effect showing the Mississippi River by moonlight with darkies singing softly in the distance, the playing of *The Wearing of the Green*, *Dixie*, and *The Star Spangled Banner*, and a derogatory allusion to the police force.

All imitators, if they would succeed, must give imitations of George Cohan, Eddie Foy, Irene Franklin, Jack Norworth, David Warfield and Ethel Barrymore, and must conclude demurely with "an imitation of an imitation of myself." Briefly, "advanced" vaudeville has advanced only in prices. The clog dance has not been lost in the shuffle; the drop-curtain showing an empty street has not been peopled by the scene painter; the xylophone players still conclude their act with the same old medley of patriotic airs; the grand-children of a hundred different "world's champion acrobatic marvels" are still

on the bill under the same old caption; the same old sidewalk comedian still periodically swats his same old humble companion in the same old face with the same old newspaper; the same old hobo monologist still strikes the same old match on his same old whiskers; the same old comedian still thinks his same old dressy "educated" partner is calling him a name when the dressy "educated" one uses a big word in his conversation.

In the secret ritual of vaudeville success there are something like thirty or more standard rubber-stamp jokes that are guaranteed always to be positive in their laughing effect upon a vaudeville audience. These jokes are priceless in helping a performer make a hit. Among the jokes are the following (every joke being familiarly known by its assigned name) :

THE "DILL PICKLE" JOKE

- A. I've got a dill pickle compass.
- B. What's a dill pickle compass?
- A. A dill pickle compass tells which way the dill pickle is going to squirt.

THE "INCOME" JOKE

- A. What is your husband's usual income?
- B. About three A. M.

THE "SATURDAY BATH" JOKE

- A. My father's a great man. He was made Knight of the Bath the last time he was in England. Do you know what the Knight of the Bath is?
- B. Sure; Saturday night.

THE "MIGHT BE" JOKE

- A. And who, pray, might you be, miss?
- B. I might be Lillian Russell, but I ain't.

THE "SISTER LENA" JOKE

- A. Your sister Mary is quite stout, ain't she?
- B. Yes, but I got a sister Lena.

THE "DYED HAIR" JOKE

- A. Is she a blonde?
- B. She was.

These samples will serve to illustrate the general quality. As effective laugh-getters in vaudeville they are equaled only by what may be termed "insult acts," that is, acts in which one performer insults his partner, and vice versa. The spectacle of one performer insulting another is logically certain to "get over." The nature of such acts I may briefly convey to my clients as follows:

- A. Not so loud there with them drums while I'm singing!
- B. Them are new drums and I got to try 'em out on somebody! You can't sing anyway.
- A. If I couldn't drum no better'n you I'd run for the river.
- B. If I couldn't sing no better'n you I'd jump in!
- A. Huh! You look like a common waiter to me!
- B. You eat at common joints then, eh?

Generally speaking, these things, however vociferous the contradictions, are the big notes in the "getting over" of a vaudeville act. There are, however, several other lesser notes that, when used, in-

variably return their employers winners with the devotees of the two-a-day. Thus, a medley of songs of a generation ago, Comrades, Sweet Rosie O'Grady, Daisy, Pals, etc., is known in the argot of vaudeville as "sure-fire." The rendition of Annie Laurie on a harp under a colored spot-light is certain to provoke loud applause. A so-called "comedy-entrance," in which a male performer sings off stage in Italian, creates the impression that his act is an "operatic" specialty, and then comes on as a sloppy "coon," is similarly sure always to inspire roars of laughter. An act wherein a comedian engages in a quarrel and a fight with an imaginary person never fails. A "finish," wherein the drop curtain is raised, revealing a special drop in the rear showing a battle scene, the performers meanwhile singing or playing The Star Spangled Banner, can not possibly fail. A singer "planted" in a box or in the gallery to take up the chorus of a song sung from the stage is an old, and consequently still good, trick. So, too, is the singing on a darkened stage of The Rosary to the accompaniment of a small organ "off," with an incandescent cross displayed on the back-drop. So, also, is the singing of a grand opera melody in rag-time. So, again, is a facetious reference to the preceding "act."

What's the use of working? Let's all go into vaudeville. . . . I'll supply the pair of white kid topped patent-leather shoes!

NOW TO REVIVE THE AUDIENCE

THE metropolitan theatre during the Spring of 1915 was abandoned almost in its entirety to revivals — some of them intentional.

Thus:

1. At the Garrick, Arnold Daly revived Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*.

2. At the Shubert, they revived Paul Potter's dramatization of Du Maurier's *Trilby*.

3. At the Empire, they revived d'Ennery and Cormon's old Union Square Theatre success, *A Celebrated Case*.

4. At the Forty-eighth Street, Emanuel Reicher revived Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*.

5. At the Lyceum, Margaret Anglin revived *The Marriage of Kitty*, *Nearly Married*, and other well known comedies under the title of *Beverly's Balance*, supplied by Paul Kester.

6. At the Booth, Louis Mann revived the play about the lovable old man who is swindled out of his savings by a smooth rascal and whose dreams of great wealth are sadly interrupted, under the title of *The Bubble*, supplied by Edward Locke.

7. At the Maxine Elliott, they revived *The Lure*, *A Man's World*, *To-day* and *East Lynne* under the title of *The Revolt*, also supplied by Edward Locke.

8. At the Republic, they revived *What is Love?* and *Maternity* under the title of *The Natural Law*, supplied by Charles Sumner.

9. At the Bramhall, they revived *The Three Daughters of M. Dupont*, *The Awakening of Spring* and Clyde Fitch's *The Climbers* under the title of *The Importance of Coming and Going*, supplied by Butler Davenport.

Let us review first the last named revival. Mr. Davenport, in his new and extremely intimate theatre which possesses a seating capacity of but two hundred and twenty, seemed splendidly to have solved the theatrical problem of bringing his audience near the stage. But, so much accomplished, it would seem still to remain for Mr. Davenport to solve the somewhat more troublesome problem of bringing his audience near the theatre.

Mr. Davenport, who once on a time wrote a play of some promise — *Keeping Up Appearances*, its name — presents a case so typical of the American playwright that he may forgive me for employing him, for clinical purposes, as a convenient horrible example. In the first place, this gentleman is over-given in his work, as are so many of his native colleagues, to the epigram. A salty epigrammatic form of expression, in which this gentleman is no more talented than are the majority of his contemporaries, is, as I have frequently endeavored to indicate, so perfectly simple and so common of execution that it has long since ceased in the drama to be

effective. It is not that epigrams died with Oscar Wilde, but that epigrams were born with Oscar Wilde, that argues for their diminished and diminishing kick in the theatre. To be apt at epigram is merely to be skillfully dull. And nothing is quite so tedious as the superficial cleverness which springs from such tongue gymnastics, the sort of cleverness which is achieved, very easily, simply by saying the wrong thing at the right time.

A second point. Mr. Davenport intimates by this play of his that he believes Briex to be the greatest dramatist west of Russia. Thus making the third party to agree with Shaw — and Briex. Worse still — Mr. Davenport, in his mad adoration of the French exclamation mark, has copied that dramatist's method without copying his methodology. In other words, he has followed Briex's system of yelling, but, unlike Briex, he has neglected to take the precaution first to get hold of something to yell about.

A third point. Like many of his indigenous messmates in dramaturgy, Mr. Davenport would appear to imagine that all that is necessary to achieve a sensational play is to rewrite into contemporaneous American surroundings some thesis play written by a Continental dramatist more than a dozen years ago. Though, true enough, this *is* the best way to impress our audiences and gain a fine reputation as an original dramatic thinker, Mr. Davenport has committed the failure-spelling error of attempting

to insert into the theories he has cabbaged from Wedekind, Thoma and Brieux some theories of his own and thus divulges himself in the light of a Raffles prowling stealthily, noiselessly, hither and thither in the dark, searching out jewels with a flash-lantern, and the meanwhile lustily singing ragtime. For instance, instead of being content to win native kudos by following the established custom of reciting the cabbaged foreign authors' verbatim and so, accurately, — in this immediate instance Thoma and Wedekind (see box office receipts *Cosmo Hamilton's Blindness of Virtue*) — Mr. Davenport has imagined that he might improve upon these Continentals by slipping in, as they say in the newspapers, some of his own stuff. The result is, naturally, grotesque. And the ideas of the Continentals are made to appear red-nosed and absurd.

Thus, parodying the author of *The Awakening of Spring*, Mr. Davenport seeks to improve upon the Wedekind argument for the sex information of children by their parents by suggesting that the best person to safeguard with words the sex morals of a little girl of ten is a mother whose social commercialization of her own sex values constantly casts its glamour of romantic prosperity before her child's eyes. Thus, parodying Brieux, Mr. Davenport argues that a child born of a second act *Three Daughters* climax will unquestionably be a monstrosity. And so the Davenport wisdom proceeds.

The best and only artistically conceived scene in

the Davenport play, a scene in which a young girl's hereditary viciousness is projected now by a twitch of her little shoulder, now by a quick nervous whisper, now by commenting with unconscious significance on the fragrance of a man's hair tonic, was vigorously denounced by my tender critical colleagues as the worst. To argue that a scene is not well done because it is disgusting is to consign a great deal of Gorki's *Night Refuge*, of Tolstoi's *Resurrection*, of Shaw's *Mrs. Warren*, of *Porto-Riche* and of the Bible to the sewers of art, letters, philosophy and imagination.

A Celebrated Case was not only a revival of A Celebrated Case, but also — being presented with an all-star cast — a revival of bad acting. The play itself was in its original presentation in the late seventies one of the now familiar specimens of thrill melodrama in which "I'll always believe ye innocent," "I don't like the looks of that man," my-long-lost-daughter and purses of louis figured conspicuously. The play in its latest manifestation was a thrill melodrama, the most conspicuous thrill of which was experienced by the audience in watching the all-star hero, the all-star heroine, the all-star villain, the all-star comedy relief character and all the other all-stars fight to the death with one another to determine which one could get and hold for the longest period of time the center of the stage. . . . All being successful.

Aside from this Ibsen-like conflict of wills, the

play was interesting in providing the dramatic critics an opportunity to remark how greatly the drama has changed in the last three decades and in providing all other persons an opportunity to observe how little it actually has changed. Since *A Celebrated Case* was first produced, the automobile, the submarine, the wireless, the aeroplane and countless such wonderful things have been given the world; but in the drama the butler is still going out of the room backwards, the faithful old servant's eye is still invaded by a tear when his master finds himself in dire straits, the guilty are still being found out in the end and the innocent vindicated, the bashful young lover still nervously holds the bunch of flowers behind his back, the drama's jewelry still knows no other form than that of a necklace, little Willie is still reuniting papa and mamma, husbands are still returning unexpectedly, the wrong person is still always being suspected and accused of the murder, old darkey servants are still hobbling around with one hand on their kidneys, characters due on the scene at a certain time are still always found ringing the doorbell following the remark: "He ought to be here any minute," and this remark is still always found to be followed with, "Ah, that must be he now," the abused orphan is still winning the desirable male from under the nose of her haughty rival, husbands still fail to recognize their wives at masquerade balls, the lady playing the piano in a drama still breaks down in the midst of the playing and buries her face

in her arms, the lady standing beside the baby-grand and singing a song in a dramatic scene still suddenly breaks down and can not continue, and the stock market still always goes the wrong way at the end of second acts.

And, in a general way, melodrama is still based upon the theory that the greatest crisis in one's life always occurs near railroad tracks.

The revival of John Gabriel Borkman, simultaneously revived a familiar and vacant tradition of the Ibsen theatre; to wit, that Ibsen must always be played on a darkened stage. The advantages that would accrue from playing, for instance, George Broadhurst on a darkened stage become of course at once apparent; but the reason for the practice of bringing all possible indistinctness to the traffic of an Ibsen drama I am unable to plumb. Borkman should, for its best effect, have its progress — save patently in the case of its last act — upon a well-illuminated platform. The dark-stage idea has done as much to instil the fear of Ibsen in the proletarian heart as Mr. William Archer's prefaces.

It is the American critical habit, whenever an Ibsen play is presented, deftly to conceal a lack of critical understanding and opinion of the Ibsen play in question by confining the entire attention to the criticizing of the actors. This seems to be as invariable a custom as the custom of American playwrights to believe that all the great crises of life take place standing up: that one cannot experience

a critical situation while seated. In an effort measurably to correct this habit, Mr. Reicher provided each of the reviewers with a critique of the play in the form of a small printed pamphlet. It is to some of the reviewers' credit that they broke away from the critical habit sufficiently to copy off this critique into their papers, even though, true, they omitted quotation marks and failed to observe that Mr. Reicher's critique was, for the major part, full of holes. For instance, sings Mr. Reicher: "In this apparently simple but thrilling drama five different theories of life are opposed to each other. The altruism, the illusion of making everybody happy, in Borkman; the right of love in Ella; the law of honor in Gunhild; the love of pleasure and amusement in Mrs. Wilton, and the right of all-overthrowing youth in Erhard. Every representative of these five theories believes himself right and, by acting accordingly, destroys the happiness of the others as well as his own; while, on the other hand, the poor, abused poet, Foldal, is in his retirement from life the only really happy person in the play." With all due respect for Mr. Reicher, pooh-pooh! The fairly good performance he gives in the rôle of Borkman is added proof that it is not necessary for an actor to know the meaning of his lines and the relation of the other lines to them in order to give an impressive portrayal: that acting, in short, has infinitely less to do with art and a capacity for dramatic analysis and understanding in general than it

has with a presentable appearance, a tone-full speaking voice, a good wig-maker and a nicely creased pair of trousers. As Mr. Reicher views the drama in which he acts, Mrs. Wilton and Erhard destroy each other's happiness and Foldal is the merry soul of the congregation. Well, well, let us not be too hard on the honorable gentleman. His critical pamphlet, at that, is no worse than Herr Barker's "preface" to Shakespeare's *Dream*.

In the two plays of Mr. Edward Locke, *The Revolt*, and *The Bubble*, we saw a revival, among other things, of the estranged couple who are brought to a reconciliation at the bedside of their dying child, the daughter of joy who becomes ocularly moist when "home" is mentioned, the idea that a lady can get drunk on a single cocktail, the ancient jabber over the double standard of sex, the joke concerning the great number of smart men who have come from a certain small town, with the observation that the smarter they are the quicker they've come, jocose allusions to the Ford automobile, the young lovers who are compelled to meet clandestinely in order to slip the eye of the girl's irate male parent, the male parent's uncompromising hostility toward the young man, and then, in the last act, when the young man has proved his worth, the male parent's remark, "I told you all along he was a fine fellow!", the use of the names of queer German food dishes to provoke laughter, and the

lady who, when her heart is breaking with a great sorrow, bravely affects an air of gayety.

The first of these revivals, *The Revolt*, followed in execution the method practiced by magazine editors who purchase some such fable as *The Common Law* or *The Salamander*, print it serially and bring their reader suddenly up against the legend "continued in the next number" just as the spotless heroine is on the highly exciting point of surrendering her virtue to the main gentleman. The impatient reader, of course, invariably discovering at the beginning of the next fifteen-cent dose that the only thing the spotless heroine surrenders is the celebrated remark that "there can be no love where there is no respect." So, when the curtain descended upon the first act of this play, we heard Mrs. Stephens making speech to the effect that "if it is right for man to soandso, then why shouldn't it be right for woman to soandso?", and we saw the lady grab her hat and wrap and slam her way out of the house, ready to join a gay party in a lady friend's flat. Obviously, what followed is what always follows in the next installments of such fictions, to-wit, nothing.

The Bubble, as remarked, looked back to the school whose pupils are

1. The irascible but kindly old fellow in lowly surroundings who, after years of hard work, has saved up a few thousand dollars.

2. The plausible villain who seeks to swindle him, the while professing warm friendship.

3. The dream of wealth, with visions of a life of ease in a select kiosk.

4. The plain, simple, loving, old-fashioned wife whose heart aches at the thought of leaving the humble home where her children were born.

5. The discovery that the gold mine was a fraud.

6. The grief-stricken old fellow and the patient wife who essays to soothe and comfort him with the remark, "Now, now, it isn't so bad as it might be. We've always been very comfortable and happy here, Gustav, and we can get along some way. So long as we have each other and our Rosie . . ."

7. The sapient young lover of the daughter who has been suspicious of the villain from the start and who has taken the secret precaution to cover up his sweetheart's father's losses;

and

8. The usual eleven o'clock coca-coda.

The dramatic records are full of this play. It bears the same relation to the legitimate stage that the sketch in which a burglar enters a lady's dark boudoir bears to the vaudeville stage and that the name Orloff bears to Russian characters in dramas, stories, sketches and musical comedies written by Americans. It is, in its way, very nearly as omnipresent as Cinderella, Divorçons, Tosca and The Relief of Lucknow.

The Natural Law was, I have pointed out, the title of a revival of the wise, magnanimous, understanding doctor character who speaks in the tempo of a home-and-mother ballad, the Manchester kindergarten of the David Graham Phillips school of heroine who is impure but honest, the notion that all college men wear sweaters and turned-up trousers, talk slang and are habitually impertinent, and the stereotyped spent Brieux fireworks. The tale was of a sweet minx who, engaged to marry a physician considerably older than herself, succumbs to the charms of a younger man, comes near a baby and seeks then to persuade her technical fiancé, the ancient medico, to assist her in holding her social position. The proposal horrifies the old gentleman, who seizes upon the opportunity to get smutty with the audience under the subtle pretext of preaching scientific obstetrical facts to the girl. In the end, however, so I was assured by one of the ushers, everything turns out respectably. The girl marries the young fellow, the doctor shakes the latter's hand in the conventional silent forgiveness, and the baby is cruelly destined to live and become a playwright.

Beverly's Balance, though also a revival of familiar episodes and situations, as well as a revival of the character of the hot-headed young So'th'nuh who resents any foamilyaity (however eminently proper) toward his women folk, of the married couple who have been brought to the verge of separation by the woman's predilection for society's

gayeties and the man's longing for quiet evenings at home, of Murphy the comic janitor, and of the overly timid lover who is finally forced into a proposal of marriage by the exasperated leading woman, was in spots conceived with grace and a feeling for comedy values. Mr. Kester labors suspiciously under a burden of seemingly incurable sentimentality, however, and this contrives to work him ill in much of his writing. In Mr. Kester's play every male is a hero, every female a heroine. The air is insistently heavy with musk. One can almost hear the noble hearts beating. One longs for just a dash of human frailty, of distemper, of dirty work. One pines, as on a desert island, to sight the passing sail of a hell or a damn, to discover the footprints of an intercepted letter or a thrown railroad switch or even a forged will.

Still another revival was observable under the title of *The Hyphen*, supplied by the late Justus Miles Forman. We found here, in the main, a phoenix of *The White Feather* and other such plays inspired by the European unpleasantness. All war plays may be divided into two classes: those in which a lady has been, or is about to be, seduced by an officer of the invading army, and those in which a foxy spy braves great perils and the love of the leading lady in the service of his country. The play under consideration dropped broadly into the second category.

Mr. Forman, in his piece, revived, among other

things, the beloved blue-print showing the usual plans and contained, in accordance with tradition, in the usual blue envelope, the safe hidden in the wall behind the usual painting, the "Won't you *say* something?" on the part of the trust-shaken hero when the accused heroine remains silent, the playing of "The Star Spangled Banner," the sudden switching out of the lights and the pulling forth of an eavesdropper from behind the portières, the bomb timed to explode at a certain moment but duly baffled in its intention, the dangerous papers that should have been burned but carelessly were not, the sudden entrance of a character while the young sweethearts are in the midst of a love scene, with the character's little cough to warn the lovers of his presence, the subterfuge of slamming a door in order to make a listener outside the room believe the person has left the scene, the smashing of a pane of glass, the warning whistle by night on the lawn under the balcony, the sudden collapse of an old gentleman the weak condition of whose heart has been "planted," and the inevitable final Lucknow arrival of the rescuing police.

One point in connection with the play brewed a raise of the eyebrow. To-wit, Mr. Forman's revival of the screen. The history of the drama shows that the screen has been used for three, and just three, purposes. In real life, a screen is used for but one purpose: to hide some unsightly object, such, for example, as father when one is entertaining

company. But not so on the stage. On the stage a screen is a device used to conceal (1) an eaves-dropper (preferably a villain), (2) a married man having supper with a gay French actress, or (3) a leading lady who is undressing for bed or for an artist, or both. Certainly the late Mr. Forman was a sufficiently imaginative fellow to have devised a more piquant use for the screen than a hiding-place for supposedly super-cunning German spies.

WHY OUR DRAMA IS BACKWARD

I AM by this time quite convinced that one of the reasons why our American drama is backward is because it is forward.

By this I mean to say that if many of our home-made plays were turned hind end foremost, and thus enacted, the process would not only convert them into much more intelligent pieces of work, but would invest them with at least a semblance of the coherence and logic which, as is pretty generally agreed, they only infrequently in their present form of presentation reveal. I am perfectly serious. Of course I appreciate that it is too much to hope that I shall be so regarded: I shall, as per established local custom in the case of any one who endeavors to expose a new idea, be set down as a low joker. In the American mind, comparative originality of viewpoint and seriousness of intention are ever held to be incompatible of association; only the simon-pure numskull or the pseudo-intellectual echo are accepted as being in earnest. Wherefore, we have Shaw proclaimed as harlequin and Charles Rann Kennedy, who merely echoes fortissimo Shaw's speech of Cæsar to Cleopatra in the fourth act of the play bearing the latters' names and entitles the echo *The Terrible Meek*, as serious thinker.

One dramatist whose goods the device versa would improve to a considerable degree is Mr. Augustus Thomas. Consider his play, *Indian Summer*. Its narrative, in the order in which it is divulged to an audience through four acts, is as follows:

ACT I

Frank Whitney, a bachelor artist well along in years, has, to save a married friend's home and name, shouldered in silence responsibility for the latter's illegitimate son. Katherine Harvey, the daughter of this married friend (now dead these twenty years), is engaged to a young lawyer, and Whitney takes it upon himself to further their love interests. The girl, however, about half Whitney's age, has posed for the elderly artist, and has come gradually to feel her love swerve from the young lawyer to this other and, to her, more sympathetic man.

ACT II

Whitney is confronted by the woman who bore the illegitimate son, is apprised that the latter has killed a man whom he found in his mother's bedroom the night before, is further warned that the boy is even now looking for Whitney, whom he believes to be the man who ruined his mother and who is responsible for his own shame of illegitimacy; and that the boy, if he finds the artist, will shoot him. The widow of the man who was in reality the boy's father learns the truth of her husband's deceit. The widow's daughter, Katherine, rejects the young lawyer, her erstwhile sweetheart, and tells Whitney that she loves him and no other.

ACT III

The young lawyer, angered at Katherine's treatment of him and her affection for Whitney, tells the girl that the latter is actually the illegitimate boy's father and dares the artist deny it. Despite Katherine's tears, however, Whitney remains silent. The illegitimate boy breaks into the studio where Whitney is and announces that he is about to kill Whitney, the betrayer of his mother. Whitney eyes him out of his purpose. Just then the police are heard coming in pursuit. The boy, in trying to escape, is shot and mortally wounded.

ACT IV

Katherine is told that Whitney, who has assumed the burden of the parentage of the illegitimate boy, is guiltless: that it was her own father whose disgrace it was. Whitney announces that he is going to France to paint, and invites Katherine to come and visit him with her mother: in time — they will be married.

Reflect now how considerably this narrative, and the play, would be improved, how much more common sense, logic — even romance — would be imparted to it were it to be written and acted in the reverse way, from the end to the beginning, from the back to the front, thus:

ACT I

Whitney announces that he is going to France to paint and invites Katherine to come and visit him with her mother: in time — they will be married. Katherine is told

that Whitney, who has assumed the burden of the parentage of an illegitimate boy, is guiltless: that it was her own father whose disgrace it was.

ACT II

The illegitimate boy breaks into the studio where Whitney is and announces that he is about to kill Whitney, the betrayer of his mother. Whitney eyes him out of his purpose. Just then the police are heard coming in pursuit. The boy, in trying to escape, is shot and mortally wounded. The young lawyer (to whom Katherine had been engaged before she fell under the aged artist's spell), angered at Katherine's treatment of him and her affection for Whitney, tells the girl that the latter is actually the illegitimate boy's father and dares the artist deny it. Despite Katherine's tears, Whitney remains silent.

ACT III

Katherine rejects the young lawyer, her erstwhile sweetheart, however, and tells Whitney that she still loves him and no other. The widow of the man who was in reality the illegitimate boy's father learns the truth of her husband's deceit, but Katherine, her daughter, does not yet positively know. Whitney is confronted by the woman who bore the illegitimate son, is apprised that the latter killed a man whom he found in his mother's bedroom the night before, is further warned that the boy is looking for Whitney, whom he believes to be the man who ruined his mother and who is responsible for his own shame of illegitimacy; and that the boy, if he finds the artist, will shoot him. Whitney now immediately realizes why the police were after the lad and tells the mother tenderly of what has happened.

ACT IV

Katherine, who is half Whitney's age and who has posed for the elderly artist, still feels that her love for the young lawyer has swerved to this other and, to her, more sympathetic man. But Frank Whitney, who has, to save her dead father's home and name, shouldered in silence these twenty years responsibility for the latter's sin, maintains his silence, permits the girl to cherish her faith and ideals and takes it upon himself to further the love interests of her younger lawyer lover and herself. (And as the curtain falls, the young girl, eyes wet with tears of misunderstanding, heart at the breaking over youth's disappointment and love unanswered, would look to Whitney with a word of pleading. But — "No, my child," he would say to her, and his voice would be as voice paternal: "I am in the Indian summer of life and you are in life's warm and so wonderful spring-time. You think you love me, dear little girl, but your love for me is like a child's love for some favorite uncle, or some favorite old friend of its parents who tells it strange stories of the great big world and helps it build wonderful castles out of its playing blocks. You'll come to see — in time. You'll come to see that youth is the greatest thing in all the world, a million times greater, a million times more important, than love itself, and that youth wants youth, longs for youth, *must have* youth for its companion — always. For youth, my child, with its flaming Fires of St. John, is love's fairy godmother. So dry your tears — ah, I see they're dry already! — and let me get you something good to eat. A full stomach is a sure cure for false sentiment. And here (hands her a book) — while I am ordering the meal, read this. It will interest you. As you see, it is by Ludwig R.

Von Halsmer, a noted Düsseldorf arborist, and its title is 'When the Sap Slackens in Winter.'")

Granting that this reversed play is still by no means a good play, will you not concede that, whatever its resident demerits, it is yet a more valid, a more rational and dialectical play, and a lesser specimen of sentimental pishmince, than the original? Observe, for instance, the metamorphosis of Whitney from a typical Thomas hero into a comparatively intelligent person. Observe, for instance, the psychophysiological calmheadedness of the reversed ending in place of the dripping sugar of the original. Observe, for example, the fragmentary and irrelevant trickeries of life operating naturally in the reversed version in place of the mere trickeries of "fine construction" evident in the version exhibited. Observe — even so far as this very thing called construction goes — the greater conflict and complementary suspense of the second play.

In this same way, an inversion of most of the plays promulgated in recent seasons by the native writers for the theatre definitively improves those plays. Such a play as Owen Davis' *The Family Cupboard* becomes even a moderately holding piece of work when turned end foremost, with the final curtain falling on the news that Nelson, still finding his home with its arctic-souled wife devoid of warm *camaraderie*, has entered into an alliance with still another sympathetic package. The son's shout,

"You're keeping a chorus girl!" would thus take on a double thrill, a double intelligence, and the play as a whole would thus assume the in-this-case especially befitting circular method of construction — the play ending just where it begins — so aptly employed by such artificers as Brieux in *Les Hanneçons*, Galsworthy in *The Pigeon*, Schnitzler in *Professor Bernhardt* and Reigen, *et al.*

But to return to *Indian Summer*. Until the production of this play, it had been the invariable custom of the majority of our metropolitan critics, every time Mr. Thomas scored a new and particularly abject failure, to refer to him as the foremost American playwright. With this play, curiously enough only six years after every one else had appraised Mr. Thomas at his true worth, these same critics found him out. And they poked jest at his flamboyant platitudes, his specious "culture," his perfumed heroisms and empty melodrama. This, of course, is on the general principle that it usually takes the majority of our critics several years longer to determine the truth about our theatre and the parties to it than any one else. The case of Mr. Thomas provides an excellent example. His *Witching Hour*, as futile an agglomeration of psychological amphygouri as even *The Return of Peter Grimm* or *The Case of Becky*, was hailed as a great and profound contribution to American dramatic art. And one scene in it in particular, the scene wherein Hardmuth rushes in to shoot Brookfield, with the

latter's "You can't pull that trigger; you can't even hold that gun!", was greeted with eulogistic awe and a completely floored veneration. Behold practically the same scene in *Indian Summer* — a much more authentic scene, too — wherein Jack Boutell rushes in to shoot Whitney, with the latter eyeing the trigger into inaction, ridiculed by the same critics as bumptious, theatrical and absurd! Observe such Thomas philosophy in *As a Man Thinks* as "The world moves on man's faith in woman. Those countless lathes of industry turning out there, those railroads . . . are all testimony to this faith" — saluted by these critics as the message of a new Mohammed, a new Moses, a new Savonarola; and such precisely similar Thomas philosophy as "All the world's fine work is accomplished through the love of a good woman" in his *Indian Summer* laughed at from the belly by the same sage lads. And hearken to the spacious scoffing at his encyclopedic bulletins in *Indian Summer* on whippoorwills' eggs and the deep impression registered in the same individuals by his encyclopedic transcripts of color influences in *The Harvest Moon*.

I charge the critics with having treated Mr. Thomas inconsistently and with gross unkindness. They have encouraged him to do the very thing he is doing and, now that he has done it, they flout him, sneer at him, revile him. Augustus Thomas is still the most proficient writer of graceful dialogue among American playwrights, and he knows

more about the staging of a play than the most of them — also is he an adept professor of theatrical mechanics — but never once has he contributed a new idea, a note of substantial and authentic progress, a single living character, a single chord of fresh philosophy or a single electric observation on our life or of our peoples to the theatre of the United States.

THE "LATE" MR. SHAW

IN the light of recent developments, there would appear to be two schools of dramatic critics: those who know that George Bernard Shaw is the greatest living playwright and admit it, and those who know that George Bernard Shaw is the greatest living playwright and deny it. The first body is composed of dramatic critics. The second, of old dramatic critics.

In bygone days, as the ever-youthful Huneker, I believe, has observed, all a young man had to do to achieve a reputation was to mount a box in the public square and lustily disclaim belief in a Divine Being. Of course, as we know, things have so greatly changed since then that all the young man would have to do to-day would be to climb atop the same box and announce his belief in a Divine Being. The acquisition of celebrity in the current community has, however, in the case of young men become an even simpler performance than this. To-day, approximately all your young man need do to establish himself as a considerable figure is to keep moderately quiet—and wait. In due time there inevitably will come along some old fellow engaged in the same profession who, in an endeavor to recall attention to himself in this crowding, pushing age,

will deliver himself of a sufficient number of absurd opinions indirectly to guarantee the perspicacity and position of his young colleague.

Speaking particularly of critics of the drama, Shaw may be said in an oblique way to have been instrumental in unmaking more old reputations and making more new reputations than Ibsen, Nietzsche or Evelyn Nesbit Thaw. For every old critic who has died in battle for Pinero against Shaw, a young critic has been born to estate. For every old critic who has stuck manfully to the guns of "technique" against the guns of ideas, a young critic has been brevetted. For every old critic whose loyal heart has gone still to Tosca in jilt of Dora Delaney, there has been created a further estimation for some younger professional associate. Shaw has worked for the young critics while they slept. Or rather while the older critics slept.

The old boys have fought against him to no avail, even despite their lack of humor — an attribute that usually guarantees the popular success and wide influence of criticism in the Anglo-Saxon community. The young men, realizing that though, true enough, this same Shaw was no Hauptmann in rare dramaturgic versatility and varied grace, no François de Curel of the passions, no Tolstoi, nor even Gorki, in the distilling of visualized human hearts, no Galsworthy of the suaver parts of speech — nor yet a character dissector of the amiable penetration of an Arthur Schnitzler, nor yet a blithesome metaphy-

sician of the too widely depreciated quality of Molnar — this same Shaw was, in their time and his, the most quivering, vibrating man in the world's theatre.

For his was the position as first coadjutor since Ibsen to practice with auspicious regularity at amusing the theatre through the cerebral as against the Wrisberg ganglion, as first to have successfully introduced into the theatre of his day a stage refreshed at his almost every touch with technical novelty, piquing attitude and wit. The first, moreover, systematically to remember that words ever speak louder than actions in the quick delineation of character (Schnitzler has learned this recently to his advantage. See Professor Bernhardi); the first, moreover, again to infuse a theatre youthful in spots with a pervading youth that presently was to be felt round the globe — felt and imitated in his own country by such hustling, if comparatively inept, strivers as the Barkers and Bennetts and Hastingses and Besiers; in Germany by the Wedekinds and Herbert Eulenbergs and H. Müllers and Ludwig Thomas and Otto Soykas; in France by the Brieuxs (the influence of Shaw on Brieux is at once obvious to the discriminator between such early things as *Blanchette* and such later pieces as *Damaged Goods* — also to any one who appreciates the sly humor of Shaw's eulogy of Brieux) and the Donnays and by the little Gabriel Trarieuxs; in Austria by the Bahrs (see *Die Mutter* — influenced by Shaw via Wede-

kind; see *Das Tänzchen*; see parts of *The Yellow Nightingale*) and the *Felix Saltens*; in Russia by the *Tchekhovs* and (via Germany) the *Leo Birinskis*; in Ireland by the *Lennox Robinsons* and *George Birmingham*s; in Scotland by the *Graham Moffats* — and on. From *Arnold Bennett's What the Public Wants* and *The Great Adventure* on through the whole of *Barker*; from *MacDonald Hastings' New Sin* and *Love and What Then?* on through *Besier's Don* and *Lady Patricia*; from *Thoma's Moral* (see *Mrs. Warren*) through a nice slice of *Wedekind* and from *G. Hermann's Wüstling* (see *The Philanderer*) to *Freksa's Der Fette Cæsar* (see *Cæsar and Cleopatra*); from the later *Brieux* across the frontiers to the *Narrentanz* of *Birinski* and thence northwest through the *Patriots* of *Robinson* and a measure of the Irish prose plays — there is breathed, true, here and there only faintly, but breathed still, the impudent scent of the influence of the man whose early critical tourneys in *The Saturday Review* foreshadowed the obtaining of a new contemplation of the theatre — of a theatre that should be at once artistic and practical, of a drama that should be neither mere drama nor mere literature, but of a drama that should be at once drama *and* literature.

That Shaw possesses the truly staggering plasticity of *Hauptmann* it were absurd to claim. That, work for work, his record is the peer of the German's it might be equally futile to contend. But

that the influence of the Shaw dramatic mind as opposed to the Hauptmann dramatic heart has not been a more vigorous, a more inspiring, and a more blood-giving theatrical one constitutes a different decision. Hauptmann, the pioneer of *Before Dawn* and *Beaver Coat* days has in these, his later years, declined steadily into the comparative unimportances of *Gabriel Schilling* and *The Bow of Odysseus*. The trail blazer, as all trail blazers, has seen another than himself strike easily ahead on the path he has laboriously opened and decorate the clearing.

Shaw has brought humor to what, though so regarded, was never tragedy. He has used the stage as a tool instead of permitting the stage so to use him. (Hauptmann only twice or thrice has done as much.) He has rid the theatre, so far as any one man has dared, of its mighty platitudes. He has been no great "thinker," true, but he has at least been a nimble thinker — and where in the theatre is there to-day such another? He has taught the theatre not to stand in awe of itself; he has given it the self-confidence his immediate associates had sought (and successfully) to take from it. And he has, from first to last, been interesting in spite of all this.

After which lavish hymn, let us be quick to announce that this Shaw's play, *Pygmalion*, is a heavy disappointment to those of us who look for Shaw successively to out-Shaw himself. Such, however, is ever the critical attitude. The better the play,

the more the sedulous critic is inclined elaborately to search out its deficiencies. The better the play, the greater the challenge to the critic. Anybody, even some of our New York newspaper critics, can easily appear critically brilliant over the plays in which Miss Billie Burke acts — which is to say, bad plays. Such a feat is absurdly simple. A poor play gives the critical mind no fight. The battle is wholly one-sided. The man who would employ such an occasion critically to exercise his humorous talents would be likely to laugh at a funeral, a comedy by Cicely Hamilton or some other such sad happening in the lives of his fellow mortals. But, confronted by a play of positive merit, your critics must protect themselves and save their faces by one of two means: either boldly to dismiss the play as being no good at all and "consequently not deserving of serious criticism" (a familiar trick which permits the critic to maintain his reputation by reverting to his established custom of contemplating jocosely a bad play), or to admit the play is a good one and then devote several hours of hard extra work to ferreting out the play's potential defects. One of the favorite critical expedients (in England as in America) in the criticizing of a Shaw play is the first of these two means.

Although *Pygmalion* is not of the same quality as Shaw's other recent play, *Androcles and the Lion* — and not to be compared with such of his lustrous products as *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, *Man and Superman* and the like — I frankly confess to having been

prejudiced in its favor before my eyes were set upon it. News of its theme had already been wafted to my chamber, and by virtue of the circumstance that here was a thesis that long had been a personal hobby with me — I had, indeed, spent a whole summer abroad several years ago in experiments associated with it — my partiality was to be the more clearly comprehended. What Shaw has here negotiated is an unplatitudinous dramatization of the platitude that what one says doesn't count so much as the manner in which one says it. This, the especial Shaw knack. Give him a platitude and he will build you a fresher, greener play out of it than the vast majority of his fellow dramatists will be able to derive out of a proportionately brilliant thematic novelty. *Pygmalion* is, in truth, almost in the nature of a dare! Shaw has taken for it the most ancient materials that the cobwebbed files of the theatre contain, and out of these materials has created a play which gives his audiences every impression of something quite new and startling. Here, of course, as H. L. Mencken has aptly observed, the celebrated Shaw secret: the ability to put the obvious in terms of the scandalous.

What we have as basis for *Pygmalion* is nothing more than the glutinous *Sis Hopkins* story, that veteran of countless stage engagements which almost every playwright soon or late in his career writes, either in its entirety or in part, all over again. Having its genesis in *Cinderella*, this theme — the

dowdy baggage transformed into a wench of fashion — has done brave service on the stage for generation after generation. Recall merely a few instances at memory's right hand where the basic stuff of the theme has figured in some degree or other: The Marriage of Kitty, Smith (second act), The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary, The Real Thing, Kitty MacKay, Peg o' My Heart, Years of Discretion, The Marionettes, The Wishing Ring, Fanchon, Merely Mary Ann, Lena Rivers, Caprice, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, The Lady from Oklahoma, Rachel, Eliza Comes to Stay, Prunella. And think of the innumerable Belle of New York species of music show "books" in which the main ingredient of the thing has appeared! Consider merely the recent libretti: Sari, The Belle of Bond Street (The Girl from Kay's), Sweethearts, The Little Café The Purple Road, The Sunshine Girl, The Lady and the Slipper, Eva, The Red Petticoat, The Gypsy — memory cannot contain them all. The old story: Act I — poor girl, poor dress; Act III — rich girl, rich dress. My terms are general, but my meaning remains nonetheless particular. Then, as if these materials were not sufficiently stale to make his dare seem properly spectacular, Shaw piled Matterhorn on Mount McKinley by topping this basic trash with the perennial platitude already referred to.

And what the result? A farce brighter, quicker with humor and satire, more tensely athrob with novelty and thematic interest than even the rival

Hauptmann himself was able in Schluck and Jau to build out of materials a thousand times fresher and more fertile. Against Pygmalion, at bottom, may be directed the remark of the man who, coming out of the Lyceum Theatre after witnessing a performance of the pure-girl-cave-man-I-hate-you-I-have-grown-to-love-you fable called *The Land of Promise*, observed that every darned time he went into a theatre he saw this play. What say you then to a dramatist who, despite an equally trite set of tools, has yet made *Pygmalion*, as it in its totality flashes across the footlights, entertain four world capitals?

In an earlier paragraph, I have hinted at certain previous personally conducted experiments as to the soundness of the theory that any girl—even an American girl—may be made moderately interesting if she gets some one to doctor up her speaking voice. These experiments, which would seem to be acutely relevant to the present critical subject, had to do with a clinical effort to determine the relative intensity of the emotion kindled in one by the professions of adoration on the part of maidens representative of each of six different countries—the United States, England, Germany, France, Austria and Italy. After a series of experiments with some three or four hundred young ladies of these various nationalities, experiments conducted through the employment of the pianoforte and the articulation on the part of each of the three or four hundred of the

words "I love you," I deduced that, were the speaking voices of the different young ladies to be transferred to the keyboard, their respective "I love you's" would be as follows:

1. I love yuh (American) — d c c (*allegro giusto*).
2. I love you (English) — d d \sharp d \sharp (*freddamente*).
3. Ich liebe dich (German) — c cc c (*moderatissimo*).
4. Je vous aime (French) — c \sharp d f (*pp.*).
5. Ish lieb' dish (Austrian) — d a a (*ornatamente*).
6. T'amo tanto (Italian) — c c c \sharp c \sharp (*ff.*).

These notes, then, were found to contain what soul—or lack thereof—reposed in the amorous responses of the different young women. Now if you will play these notes in turn in the manner indicated on the keyboard, you will quickly discover what I discovered: that your heart will respond most quickly to the vocal tones of the French girl. *Actually* respond. And why? Because the vocal tones of this French brand of baggage are the precise tones that may scientifically be discovered to induce sympathetic vibrations (or wave movements) of the endolymph, hence the fibers of the basilar membrane, and hence what are colloquially known as the "heart strings." As is well known, the cross-fibers of the membrane of the cochlea of the internal ear are similar to the strings upon the backboard of a piano, short at the beginning (these, the treble strings), and gradually increasing in length as the membrane continues (to the bass strings). I may,

therefore, illustrate the effect of the French girl's voice upon the ear strings (and via the ear strings upon the "heart strings") by asking you to imagine this girl and each of the girls of the other nationalities mentioned speaking their "I love you's" into the body of an upright piano, the top of which has been thrown back.

Through such a test — one familiar to psychologists in the experimenting generally with the quality of auditory sensations — it will be found that, as the speaking voice contains certain tones to which the piano strings are "tuned," the strings (or notes) indicated in the table of notes deduced by me originally will duly be thrown into vibration and set ringing. Wherefore, as has been stated, as the ear strings correspond to the piano strings, it follows that the former will be set ringing in the same relative manner. Then, moreover, as the human heart (via these strings) is quickest to respond to the notes *c# d f pianissimo*, it follows as a conclusion that it is the French girl's speaking voice, rather than the French girl, that so invariably provokes in the male of the cosmic species a feeling of interest where the speaking voices of other nations and the girls behind those voices are proportionately unsuccessful in the achievement.

But my experiments did not stop here. In order to assure myself that my prefatory convictions were absolutely correct, I spent one whole month training an American girl, an English girl, an Austrian girl,

a German girl and an Italian girl to speak the words "I love you" as the French girl speaks them, *i. e.*, in the tones of $c\sharp$ d f . This accomplished, I caused myself to be blindfolded and to be approached in turn by each of these five representative maidens and the original French girl, each of whom repeated to me their "I love you's." And — Eureka! I found that, although I had in the process of the previous experiments begun to feel amorously partial toward the French girl (via her speaking voice), I now responded to each one of the girls in precisely the same degree! In other words, blindfolded and not knowing which of the young ladies was speaking, inasmuch as their voices were now one and all of a similar mellifluence, I found that I became scientifically attracted to one as greatly as to another. When one realizes that the human ear is capable of 11,600 different sensation qualities, the weight of the human positiveness of my experiment becomes the more obvious. It seems only fair to admit, however, that we learn from E. B. Titchener, from E. Mach's Contributions to the Analysis of Sensations, from Helmholtz's Sensations of Tone and from Hermann's Physiol. d. Gehörs, that the experiment may be conducted with equal relevance and success by testing the effect of the tones on dogs.

To return to Pygmalion. As if by way of double-dare, Shaw seems deliberately to have taken for his substructure H. V. Esmond's play Eliza Comes to Stay, a scrupulously morose gewgaw that ran half

a season not so long ago in London. He has even called his heroine Eliza! Having taken Esmond's piece, Shaw appears to have rolled up his cuffs and observed: "I will now show you, ladies and gentlemen, the difference between a hack playwright and one who really knows the trade." And having delivered himself of this comment, he has proceeded to inject "the voice makes the woman" theory into Esmond's plot in place of Esmond's inference that "the clothes make the woman." And so auspiciously has Shaw turned the tables that I doubt not he could even take a play by Henri Bernstein and, by injecting sense into it, make it partly interesting.

To Rudolph Christians, Herr Direktor of the German Theatre in Irving Place, who produced the Shaw play for the first time in this country, my salute! This German Theatre of his, incidentally, is probably the one playhouse in the Greater City of New York which a theatregoer may haphazardly enter and not become metamorphosed instantaneously into a patron of the moving pictures.

THE SPORT OF KINGS

FIRSTLY, it has ever been my opinion that, given a dozen girls of sufficiently luscious contour and savory visage, any one — even George V. Hobart — can write a successful music show. And secondly, this being true, it has ever struck me that it amounts to a wanton pillage of precious time to go to the theatre to review the average music show when one may accomplish the appraisal in twenty minutes or less from a table in the public eating and drinking place infringed upon after the play by the grisettes of the chorus. Thus, at eleven-thirty of any night during the season, one may pass intelligently upon most New York musical shows at the resort that happens to be conducted at the moment by the son of the House of Rector, just as an excellent critical estimate may regularly be obtained in London at the Savoy or nearby Romano's, in Berlin at the *bierstuben* in the Jägerstrasse and the spacious *weinkeller* in the Friedrichstrasse, in Vienna at the Réclame and at the little places off the Kärntnerstrasse and down toward the Stefanplatz, and in Paris at any one of four or five haunts scattered around the region of the Champs Elysées and that part of the boulevard that glides downhill toward the Rue Richer.

Save, possibly, in Germany, and, with a few exceptions, in the United States, England, Austria and France, the governing principle of the music show stage as an institution amounts to little more than the substitution of a two-dollar admission ticket for the round of drinks and a union orchestra for the colored professor. Otherwise, save for the inferior quality of its music and, particularly, its wit, it is much the same as its franker, more honest prototype. In the light of these things, the current assumption that one must sit through two and one-half hours of is-your-brother-still-alive-no-he-lives-in-Philadelphia in order accurately to gauge one of these exhibits, is evidently a blood relative of the equally popular supposition that a dramatic critic is any man who is a dramatic critic on a newspaper. Granting, as grant one readily must, that music shows have nothing whatever in common with the arts; that they are, on the reverse, mere spectacular girl markets, exchanges and trading stations — which of the two following reports of one of these shows is the more logical and practical, the more beneficial and desirable to the public, the performers themselves and the manager? Which — the present standard newspaper form or the suggested new form?

PRESENT STANDARD NEWSPAPER FORM

The Frolicsome Princess, a new musical comedy by Harry B. Smith and A. Baldwin Sloane, produced last night at the — Theatre, relates, in two acts and three beautifully

painted scenic pictures (one showing an old windmill in action), the romance of beautiful Princess Paula, of the imaginary province of Saxonburgovia, and the socialistic Duke Rasilause. Paula, in order to win the recalcitrant Rasilause, disguises herself as a peasant girl, meets Rasilause at the mineral springs and captivates him. Rasilause learns Paula's identity from Emil Donnerwurst, a stranded German pinochle player, and spurns her. In the end, however, all ends happily for the lovers. The lines given the character of the pinochle player are especially clever, as, for instance: "A bird in the hand is worth two in Bushwick" and "All's swell that ends swell." Donnerwurst's clever catch phrase, repeated frequently, "I'm a son of a gun, by Looie!" took the house by storm. The best song numbers were: All for You and You for Me, When the August Moon Plays Ping-Pong with the Leaves in Central Park (during the rendition of which real ping-pong balls were thrown at the audience by the chorus) and The Smoky-Moky-Hokey-Pokey Rag (the latter an interpolated number by Irving Berlin). The play has been gorgeously staged by Mr. Fred Latham, the staging of one number in particular — the ping-pong song — displaying great originality and wit. The company includes, etc.

SUGGESTED NEW FORM

The Frolicsome Princess, produced last night at the — Theatre, promises to be a huge success for the following reasons:

Lillian Lewis¹ — *aetat* 18; weight 125; height 5 feet 1 inch; shape, excellent; blonde; said to be jolly and fond of motoring and dancing; mother and father dead.

¹ 200 West 45th Street.

Hazel Touraine¹ — *aetat* 19; weight 120; height 5 feet; shape, superb; brunette; said to be of quiet disposition yet *très sympathique*; fond of wine.

Angie Arborea² — *aetat* 23; weight 142; height 5 feet 4 inches; shape, ravishing; coloring, medium; said to be full of life and a clever conversationalist; divorcée; very needy.

Mae St. Cloud³ — *aetat* 19; weight 127; height 5 feet 1½ inches; shape, trim; blonde; hair when let down touches floor; "good sport"; not averse to brokers.

Beatrice Verrill⁴ — *aetat* 20; weight 125; height 5 feet 3 inches; shape, magnificent; brunette; said to be of merry nature; has expensive studio apartments in Central Park West; father dead, mother a poor washerwoman.

These five specimens are sufficient to indicate the excellent quality of the new show. There are, moreover, fourteen other equally meritorious elements in the persons of Jessica Hughes, Sallie Salome, Molly Van Sittart, Olive Tremaine (blonde); Mazie Reynolds, Dolly Anderson, Evelyn Hidalgo, Desirée Dartmoor, Billie Marthwell, Mame Mauissant, Phyllis Frane (brunette); and Alys James, Trixie French and Violet Rosenberg (mediums).

Take the American case, for example. In one of the most notorious of the native girl show ménages, the girls' salaries are graded in proportion to the girls' individual ability to tease their male hunters into the playhouse night after night. Three widely seen music shows produced during the last season

¹ 179 West 53d Street.

² Hotel Lewellyn.

³ Marceaux Apartments.

⁴ Phone number: 9979 Columbia.

and a half were the result of pools formed by outsiders with money, either for the purpose of promulgating or assuaging their own particular lady friends or giving their numerous theatre-going masculine cronies a chance behind the scenes. Two recent girl shows were financed *by* Wall Street brokers *for* Wall Street brokers. One metropolitan music show institution extends the privilege of its stage door to its regular patrons; and in the case of another girl house, the copious list of the favorites who may be passed by the stage door keeper is headed by the names of a United States Ambassador, a former district attorney, a judge, a power in the financial world, a celebrated politician, a steel magnate and one of the leading and most nose-y of New York lawyers. The music show of to-day, with its public dancing girls, is to our more hypocritical and timid civilization what the private dancing girls were to Rome in the hours of its golden, blatant glory.

Why seek to treat such sport (albeit a legitimate one) from the standpoint of something it is not?

A PLAY TO INTEREST YOU

WHY these ceaseless lamentations, these interminable hubbubboos, these vociferous ululations, on the part of our dramatic critics over the mediocre quality of the plays currently visible on the American stage? Why the correlative pleadings and deplorings and *apologiæ* that, because of such dramatic famine, their critiques must inevitably be of analogous dullness: that "how can one write entertainingly — even write at all — when there is so little of interest, indeed, so little of anything, to write about?" Is this as it should be? Is this fair to the public, fair to the drama? I think not.

As I see it, it is a critic's duty, above everything else, to interest *his* audience whether the play he is reviewing interested *its* audience or not. Hence, when there is no play of interest to set the pen to, it appears to me to be the critic's duty to create such a play. Certainly, this is the least any respectable critic can do. If not, then what the good of critics? Of course, if the critic be a "destructive" critic — like myself, for example — instead of one of the benign "constructive" mountebanks, those bizarre minstrels who bore peaceful managers and rich playwrights and poor actors and a helpless public with sapient twattle anent technique, the unities of Aris-

tote and other anachronistic wisdoms, that is a different matter. The so-called destructive critic, who, by the way, is regarded as destructive chiefly by the toothless professors of the traditions and the kindly conservative quacks who believe that constructive criticism means that only the good in drama should be given attention and the bad passed over (as if the bad were not the one and only element that intelligently called for criticism!) — the destructive critic occupies an honest and a helpful position in the community. He is to drama what vaccine is to smallpox. He makes a bit of a mess, to be sure, and a lot of children kick around with a vague idea that they ought to combat him, and he makes a great many persons sore, but he does not fail of his purpose.

He is, true enough, viewed as a low dog, a root-beer drinker, a debaucher of innocent country maidens directly they arrive in the city, a stealer of Swedish emigrant girls; some of the more bellicose pretenders whom he has destroyed sometimes even write to the theatrical papers and succeed in proving, obliquely, that he is an intelligent fellow; and he has as few friends as a "constructive" critic out of a job — but he does not fail! Of course, he fails so far as the American theatre and its managers and playwrights and actors go, but that is a small matter and of no importance. The task of convincing the latter is well and effectively looked after by his "constructive" brethren, a fact certainly sub-

stantiated by the jejune condition of the American theatre as it still stands to-day. But where he does not fail is in the rearousing of an interest in the theatre in the great force of people who — sickened by the current standards of the theatre and, further still, by the dunderheaded pamphleteers who believe they are helping that theatre by the display of a large altruism and great forgiving spirit — have temporarily deserted the acted for the printed drama. Where he does not fail is in persuading these people, in large numbers, to revisit the theatre, not, assuredly, in the dim hope of seeing good plays, but to observe for themselves that the plays are actually still as bad as the destructive critic said they were — something of which the charitable folk might possibly, if only for a moment, have been skeptical.

There is one of the many ways in which your destructive critic cannot fail finally to assist in the construction of the better theatre of the future! By the adroit exercise of a warring and outrageous tongue, he offends persons who believe they like to think for themselves to such a degree that they hasten to the theatre to determine whether he knows what he is talking about. Having discovered thereby that he does, and in the process of so doing having been encouraged by the critic to imagine that they have thought the thing out for themselves (thus being won by the critic through flattery), they sub-

sequently remain away from the theatre — not for a week or a month or a year as before — but for good and all. And so, gradually by convincing the audiences that it is their distinct duty both to themselves and to the theatre steadfastly to stay away from the theatre, the destructive critic may ultimately serve his end in compelling the inauguration of a better grade of drama. Or, if “compel” be too muscular a word, then at least in ultimately bringing producers, playwrights and actors to realize that unless better stuffs are forthcoming from them, they will have to close up shop — and go back to work.

The quality of theatrical fare recently offered the public has been of the species that has become so dear to the hearts of the moving picture oligarchs. Almost every time a new play is produced in these days, the moving picture business takes another big jump. It is not the moving pictures that are making inroads into the drama, but the drama itself! In view, therefore, of the absence of any play of sufficient novelty, bounce, imagination, whimsy and originality during the period which this critique must cover, my personally held laws of equity toward my own public demand of me, as I have said, that I, for the purposes of reviewing, create such a play for them.

Wherefore:

The most interesting presentation of the recent

weeks is a new American play designated as "a philosophical spectacle through unphilosophical spectacles" and entitled *As We See It*. Although the author admits that he can read French and German, both the idea and theme of his play are nevertheless original. The thesis of the play suggests the philosophy that it is given only to youth to be an accurate critic of life, that only youth may see the world and the world's peoples and ways for what they really are, for what they really stand for, for what, in the end, they are found to have been. It suggests that just as a too intimate and too protracted contact with anything naturally blinds one to the exact values of that object, so does so-called experience, the partner of age, dull the worldly perceptions. It suggests that youth's eyes sweeping the world with dreaming alarums, filled now with the dust of crumbling castles, now with glinting light of trivial triumphs — that youth's eyes alone appraise the world truly. It suggests that, in the eventual deduction, the complete lack of knowledge on the part of a child and the sum total of experience on the part of an old man cause both the child and the old man to see things in much the same way: that when we grow old we begin again to see the world as we saw it through the eyes of childhood. The play, which seeks to convey this idea in terms of what may be called ocular satire, is divided into three acts, thus accounted for on the programme:

ACT I

The audience is asked to travel back across the canyon of mounting years and to imagine itself to be again little children, little boys and girls of twelve, wide-eyed and wondering in the presence of the great, fresh, new world.

ACT II

The audience is asked now to imagine itself as it was at twenty-one and in the golden years that glistened after on toward the frontier of thirty.

ACT III

The audience is asked now to imagine itself in old age — or, at least, in the years to the thitherward side of fifty-five, the autumn time of life's late October.

The first act shows the world as it is seen through the eyes of a child of twelve — the audience being the child, the audience's eyes being the child's eyes. Thus we see Uncle Jim, our favorite uncle who brings us candy and tells us such funny stories, as seven feet high — one of the biggest men in the whole world — almost as tall, indeed, as those great heroes, the Policeman, the Fireman, the Iceman, the President of the United States, Diamond Dick and Papa, all of whom would seem to be on very intimate terms, especially the President and Papa. The Bank President, the World-Famous Scientist, the Great Scholar and the Celebrated Artist are all little fellows, not more than three feet tall at most.

In fact, in the scene between the Great Scholar and Diamond Dick, the latter is demonstrated to be so clearly superior in every conceivable way to the former, that the very idea of the Great Scholar's effrontery in hazarding to debate with Diamond Dick makes everybody laugh. The audience sees itself in the person of a little boy, normal in every respect save that his biceps, which his father is urged to feel every few minutes so as to note their constant surprising development, are the biceps of a young pugilist; it sees itself in the person of a little girl whose doll, instead of being only a doll as her Kindergarten Teacher (as tall and imposing and regal a creature as there is in this world) has tried to convince her, is a real living little laughing and crying baby. The little unconscious love scene between the boy and girl at the end of the act, when their respective parents come to fetch them and separate them for the whole long summer (it is in the late spring of the year), with Diamond Dick covertly tugging at the boy's coat and whispering to him "not to be such a sissy — what'll the gang think of him?", with its gift of a stick of peppermint candy to the girl and the immediate regret and maneuvering to get it back again, has the ring of genuine reminiscence. So, too, has an earlier scene in which the little boy tries to deduce some way in which to get rid of his hated enemy, his bed, which constantly stares him in the face from the window of the second story of his home; and so, too, have the scenes in

which even the most trivial actions of the grown characters are enveloped through childhood's eyes with the atmosphere of elaborate melodrama.

The second act scene is basically the same as the scene of the first act, save that now the futuristic chaos of the world as seen through a child's eyes has resolved itself into the world's actual shapes and forms — the bed cannot be seen through the window; the trees are not so tall, nor do pears and cherries any longer grow on the same branch; the great roadway that in the first act seemed to stretch a hundred miles over the fields into the mysterious distance is now seen to be only a rather narrow foot-path leading across the back yard to the automobile road about one hundred feet away; the shrubbery that in the first act seemed to be a deep jungle is now only shrubbery. The eyes of youth — the little boy of the first act is in the twenties now; so, also, is the little girl — see that Uncle Jim (who is the same age as in Act I, only the ages of the two central characters, the boy and girl, changing during the play) is not the big and wonderful man he seemed to be. In fact, Uncle Jim is a very little man, without any other ambition or purpose in the world than to be nice to everybody. The President of the United States, whose gross deficiencies the Youth points out to him in a scene in which the Youth rehearses his college debate with the chief executive, is about two and one-half feet tall, a mere pigmy. Diamond Dick? The Youth smiles reminiscently when the

name is mentioned — poor old Diamond Dick has been dead these dozen years! His place has been taken by D'Artagnan, who in one scene stands at the top of the stairs of the house and with his sword puts to rout the combined heroes of G. A. Henty, Shakespeare, Dickens and Tolstoi, although in the crisis he is saved from the blade of Ibsen's Master Builder only by the timely interference of the elegant Van Bibber, who flabbergasts Solness with a mere look.

That is, D'Artagnan seems to have taken Diamond Dick's place, although as the act progresses, the Youth grows rather chilly toward the brave Frenchman and one senses that it is a case of *cherchez la femme*. The latter is presently discovered to be none other than Flavia, ruler over the kingdom of Zenda, although Youth, inconstant ever, subsequently makes a rendezvous (a droll scene) now with Hope Langham, her of Soldiers of Fortune, then with Nora Helmer. The latter, however, try as he will to woo her, to cajole her, rebuffs him, keeps him at a distance. The Celebrated Artist seems to Youth the biggest man in the world, although Youth's eyes are not sure whether, after all, the Great Scholar and the Bank President are not the tallest men in the community. The little girl, now in the wild glory of young womanhood, also sees the world with new eyes, though the Youth is still her hero, still her love. But, where the little boy of the first act approached *her*, albeit timidly,

with the stick of candy, the girl now finds that *she* must make the advances. And the scene (in nature much the same as that at the conclusion of the preceding act) in which the girl, about to leave with her parents for a trip around the world, tries vainly to convey to the young man her heart-longing for him, her wish to have him claim her for wife, with the young man's coattails the while being tugged at by the Bank President, the Great Scholar and the Celebrated Artist with their whisperings "Remember your 'career' — don't tie yourself down — don't let sentiment interfere with your future," brings the curtain down.

The third act scene remains still basically the same, although not so precisely ordered as the view of the world through the eyes of youth — besides, the real roses on the bushes are made of paper now and the footpath, although it is the same footpath, seems much longer through the eyes of age than it did before, and the bed again stares from out the window — only now the bed is at once a welcome and a frightening sight, at once rest temporary, rest eternal. And everybody in the world seems to be of pretty much the same height — it doesn't matter who they are or what they are. Everybody, that is, but the Celebrated Artist and the Iceman. The young man, now in the late fifties, and himself a celebrated artist after long and patient and health-rending struggle, sees the Celebrated Artist as a little man, the fine, healthy, big-lunged Iceman that

he might have been a giant. For the now crabbed old man, the quondam youth, has lost everything (so he sees it) in his fight for fame — youth, the opportunities to amass a sufficient fortune against the drab and lingering years, the pleasures of life — the girl, his sweetheart, love. As his companion, D'Artagnan's place has long since been taken by another hero, Cyrano de Bergerac. As the act progresses, however, the marked intrinsic and even external similarity of Cyrano to Diamond Dick, the man's boyhood hero, becomes apparent to the audience. Uncle Jim, who seemed so small to the man in youth, now looks to him very much like any other man, although Uncle Jim is still the small man he was when seen through the eyes of youth in the second act. The old man sees the President of the United States to be of greater stature than the Scholar, and of vastly greater stature than the Bank President. Thus is his vision distorted.

Yet he refuses to believe when he is told by the Oculist, the *compère* of the play, that he does not see aright: that the Bank President is much taller than the President of the United States, in fact, that the Bank President provided the heels on the President's shoes to make him appear as tall as he seems. The scene wherein the man's golden sweetheart of other and fairer days flashes again into his life and, on her sudden and unexpected entrance in the midst of a most important piece of work, causes everything to leave the man's vision, everything and every

one but her (the entire scene being suddenly darkened and the woman revealed to the man in a purple flush of light), and the subsequent scene wherein the man learns that what confronts him, what has so shocked his thoughts off the rails of work and blotted out the world, is not the woman herself, but the memory of her, the ever-beating, ever-pounding memory of her crying out to him across the pallid and disappointing years to his empty throne of fame, have a quasi-Hoffmannsthal quality. (A delicate touch has been imparted to this scene by the author through the device of phrasing the love passages spoken here by the characters in the same terms as the love scene in Act II, thereby suggesting the despotism of rosemary, the tyranny of memories.) When the darkness is finally dissipated, the audience observes the scene as it was at the beginning of the act. Where the man was standing, however, the audience now beholds the little boy of Act I. And, as the little boy — for such was the old man, after all — as the little boy, in whose breast beats the heart of the old man's experience, stands there, the scene gradually changes back in every detail, save that the bed staring from the window seems no longer so filled with dread, to the disordered scene of the first act.

Obviously, it is out of the question for me in this small space to review this play for you at the length it properly demands; to quote its many witty lines such, for example, as the youth's "We men flatter

ourselves when we believe a woman does not love us: why otherwise would she waste her time on us?", as the scholar's "Persons object to the presentation of vice in attractive form. In what other form, pray, can it be presented?" So, too, is space not given me wherein to thread the play's love story for you; wherein to tell you of the ingenious scheme of the musical accompaniment to the play, with its first act childhood's immature and undeveloped *motif* conveyed by an ill-assorted orchestra that lacks the love notes of viola and violin and 'cello, that runs to heavy brass and piccolo and rattling drums — with its second act youth's throbbing *motif* of adventure and dreams and passions conveyed by an orchestra now amplified to the full with oboe and viola, B-flat clarinet and 'cello, alto-saxophone and French horn — with its last act dimming *motif* of dimming age conveyed by the orchestra now again deleted of its instruments of passion, with its violins become faint and squeaky and with its ominous beatings of funereal kettledrums.

Nor is space left in which to describe for you the trick of the increased vividness of the scenic pictures of each successive act, as they are seen first rather indistinctly through the eyes of childhood, then more vividly through the eyes of youth, then more vividly still, albeit not so genuinely as through youth's eyes, through the spectacles of age's weakened vision. Thus, the house in the first act set back at R₃, is brought in the second act down to R₂ and in the

third act to the very footlights at R1, conveying the sense to the audience, in the last case, that it is being assisted nearer to the vision by old age's eyeglasses.

The critics are divided in their opinions of the dramatic and artistic worth of the play, some contending that the little girl in Act I should have worn a pink bow in her hair in place of the baby blue bow, others arguing that the bow should have been cream color. Still others contend that while the idea of the play is an excellent one and the treatment and evolution thereof original, genuinely skillful and amusing, the play as a play is ruined because one of the minor women characters in the second act wears a freakish and unbecoming gown. On the other hand, two of the critics approve of the play heartily on the ground that its lighting effects are awfully pretty.

But enough. I have done my duty — at least, in part. It now only remains for me to become again the conventional critic and to shirk my work by reviewing a couple of plays actually presented. Therefore, will *Children of To-day*, by Miss Clara Lipman and Mr. Samuel Shipman, kindly step forward! We observe here a dramatization of Oscar Wilde's celebrated epigrammatic duet: "Children begin by loving their parents; as they grow older they judge them, sometimes they forgive them" and "Few parents nowadays pay any respect to what their children say to them: the old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out," the dram-

atization being completely successful in ruining two perfectly good epigrams. To a not inconsiderable degree, it would appear to be the belief of an ample quota of our native showwrights that wherever there are bad manners there is drama. This probably accounts for the fact that our American society set is so often chosen by our playmakers as dramatic material. It certainly accounts in a measure for the fact that our native plays are so often unsuccessful in London. It also probably accounts for the fact that almost every American thinks he has sufficient material out of his own life and actions to make a play. To a not inconsiderable degree, it would similarly appear to be the belief of a number of our showwrights that satire means simply the reversing of the conventional, that any one may be a satirist merely by throwing the bat toward the ball instead of throwing the ball toward the bat. The authors of the piece under discussion are evidently profound swamis of both these cults. The result is the usual result when Bernard Shaw falls into the hands of persons who imagine that all that is required to be another Shaw is the ability to select some particularly old-fashioned play and masquerade it as a new and exceedingly up-to-date play by making the son or daughter the hero or heroine in place of the father or mother. This, believe the hapless persons, causes the play to be "up-to-the-minute," "satirical" and "somewhat revolutionary." What it generally causes, however, is nothing more than the

spoiling of the old-fashioned play. The formula for a "Shavian" play, as it would seem to exist in the curious local showwright mind, is not difficult of deciphering. All one has to do is to take a play like, say, Mr. A. E. Thomas's *The Rainbow* and put the father's speeches in the daughter's mouth, and vice versa — that is, have Miss Chatterton speak Mr. Henry Miller's lines and Mr. Miller Miss Chatterton's. Or, say, a play like *Mrs. Dane's Defence* and place most of Mrs. Dane's sentiments in Sir Daniel Carteret's mouth and most of Sir Daniel's in Mrs. Dane's. Here would be a brief scene from such a so-regarded "Shavian" version of the Henry Arthur Jones play:

MRS. D.: Then you never saw your cousin Felicia after childhood?

SIR D.: No — I — I — (*suddenly breaks down*) I can't bear it! I can't bear it!

MRS. D.: What?

SIR D.: You're questioning me as if I were a loose man. I feel you suspect me still! . . .

MRS. D.: Come, my dear Sir Daniel, this won't do. (*Takes him gently by the hand*) We are here to get the truth, aren't we?

SIR D.: Go on, I'll tell you everything. But I don't know what you'll think of me. I don't care! I'd almost rather everybody believed me guilty of being dissolute than suffer what I have the last few weeks!

MRS. D.: (*after a pause*) You're lying!

SIR D.: (*flashing out on her*) How dare you? How dare you? (*Stands confronting her*)

MRS. D.: (*looking straight at him*) I say you're lying!
 (*She looks at him steadily. His eyes drop. He sinks on his knees before her, seizes her hand in supplication, looks at her appealingly*)

SIR D.: I was only a child . . . I believed her . . . etc., etc.

Were Children of To-day merely a bad play, I should deal with it here at no such length. But it is more than a merely bad play; it is representative of all that vulgarity and untutored atmosphere of viewpoint which operate so militantly against the American stage. Therein lies its significance and its warning.

Rachel, a so-called "romantic drama" by Carina Jordan, founded on alleged episodes in the career of the illustrious Mademoiselle Elisa Felix, is another of those plays containing a Moe Rees. Whenever an invitation is extended me to examine a drama laid in France about one hundred years ago and I detect the presence of a Moe Rees on the programme, I immediately prepare myself for the worst. Moe Rees: the drama:: young Travers: the novel. Moe Rees: the drama:: Mandy: the coon song. Being a dutiful critic, however, I always remain in my chair until quarter after ten, at which time the heroine is by rule due to baffle the exploring villain by secreting Moe in the closet. This dramatic *coup* negotiated, I feel sufficiently secure in my knowledge of what invariably transpires after that to go home and enjoy myself by not reading

what happens to be the most talked-of book of the day. After Moe has been hidden in the closet, I am perfectly sure that the villain, who is always very passionate, will seek to barter with the heroine for her person in exchange for Moe's freedom, will be rebuffed with hauteur and will thereupon begin chasing the heroine around the room. And I am always similarly sure that later on, when Moe staggers out of his hiding place, the heroine will assist him in getting away by "outwitting" his pursuers. These pursuers are always "outwitted" in one of three specific ways: (A) — through being directed by the heroine to search for Moe in the room at R2 so that Moe meanwhile may make his getaway through the room at L2; (B) — through being diverted by a fiery patriotic harangue on the part of the heroine; or (C) — through the heroine pretending to make ardent love to the leader of the mob and thus beguiling the latter into temporary inaction until Moe sneaks around the back of the sofa and out of the open door. I have generally found these "romantic dramas" to translate romance in terms of costumes and drama in terms of shouted words. Rachel is indeed an old, old fabric. Madame Bertha Kalich essays the title rôle. But would it not seem to take a great actress to play a great actress? May a stunning talent be represented save by a stunning talent? Here a subject for the newspaper interviewers. Of course, Miss Elsie Janis's imitation of the talented Bernhardt is a logic-smashing performance; of course, no

actor, however otherwise incompetent, has ever succeeded in failing wholly in the rôle of that actor of actors, Napoleon Bonaparte — but may not the question be still an open one? The argument against me will be that in such a play as Rachel, Madame Kalich is called upon to depict, not Rachel *acting*, but Rachel off the stage, in private life. But the argument in turn against this argument would be the patent one that all great actresses have exhibited and do exhibit a more elaborate species of acting off the stage than upon it.

ON CHILDREN'S IMAGINATION AND OTHER FAIRY TALES

WHENEVER the subject of fairy tales or fairy tale plays arises, numerous erudite adult minds arise concurrently to deliver themselves of the usual benevolent walla-walla on the allied subject of the child mind.

We learn from them that the child mind is just one little mass of imagination, that it is all guilelessness and lovely innocence, and that it finds its supreme joy in the contemplation of elemental and inconsequent spectacles, so long as the latter possess noise and color. By what form of logic and reasoning this conclusion had been arrived at, I cannot say. Very probably it was deduced by the same acute and triumphant minds that thought out the theory that a playwright must "plant" everything in his play and never under any circumstances hazard to take his audience by surprise, that thought out the Prohibition Party and romaine salad.

By what token of mental darkness these abject fallacies as to the child mind have persisted, is likewise not given me to explain. Very probably, however, have these delusions thrived in the same inscrutable manner as have such indecent uniform hallucinations as the rhythmic melodic beauty of

Edvard Grieg's op. 46, No. 3 (in the orchestra suite from the music to Peer Gynt) and the appetite stimulating power of caviar.

What is spoken of as imagination in the child mind is not imagination but lack of it! Imagination is the power to elaborate the most infecund seed in the soil of prosaicism into the lotus flower of romance, the power to conjure up dear dreams in the daylight, the power to view me as a constructive critic, the power to get tipsy on beer or — raised to the nth — the power even remotely to detect any real drama in the plays of Henri Bernstein. Imagination is impossible without experience, education, a mellowed heart, a seasoned stomach, a long and broad perspective. The child mind is damp, soft, impressible clay, and never does it nor can it create the stuffs of ideality unless an older and more practiced mind concretely insinuates into it the basic building materials. The fact that a child takes for granted anything and everything you tell it proves that its mind is one little lump of belief, but not of imagination. And imagination and blind belief (or ignorance) never go together — as witness the American negro, English cooking and clergymen who have not posted themselves on Buddhism.

The imaginative individual is one who can penetrate to wondrous mental pictures, who can feel out far-off things and far-off thoughts and bring them home into his own little stockyard without being supplied in advance with a road map.

This is unquestionably the real reason why our theatrical producers take the wise precaution of explaining thoroughly and in detail the plots and scenes of their new plays in the newspapers before the plays are presented. Otherwise, our audiences might not be able to achieve a sense of even scenic illusion for themselves at the Belasco Theatre. It is not enough for the national imagination that the programme state that the second act is laid in the library of Senator Strickland, and that the stage setting reveal a room that has all the marks of a library. The fact that it is a library must be proved. You must show the audience real books, a real reading lamp with a green shade, a real paper cutter, a real blotter. Indeed, if ever I write a play one of whose scenes is laid in a library, I shall insist that the producer put up a sign on the wall reading "Silence." And after this brilliant *coup*, if my play isn't a success and if I am not hailed as a startling new figure in the realistic drama, it will not be the fault of us dramatic critics.

To achieve the best and most healthful esemplastic results with the child mind, therefore, we must never trust it to itself. We must teach it the A B C of imagination, lest, when it grow older, it begin to conceive and compose such plays as Owen Davis thinks up. Imagination may be defined as the melody that the matured mind plays after its strings have been tuned by adversity. The only rich man in our time who has been blessed with the power

of imagination is William Randolph Hearst. One may not coincide with the results of Mr. Hearst's imagination, but the fact flashes that he stands alone as possessed simultaneously of money and the plastic faculty.

So far as the innocence of the child mind goes, I maintain (I am speaking of the child mind in relation to the theatre) that it is innocent only as to causes and reasons; that otherwise it is as sophisticated as the average mind of the sap age. In illustration, take some such scene as that between Aubrey and Paula at the close of Act II of *Tanqueray*. The tenderest of youngsters will understand its warring notes as well as an older head — save in the deciphering of its fundamental causes. I have studied carefully the effect of such scenes on children, and I have noticed that the discords of human nature are remarkably clear to them. They know them not by name — that is the only difference. They see many colors, but they are partly color blind. Red to them is pink and dark green to them is light green. They get the shade, but not exactly, not securely. In further illustration, take some such scene as was made visible by Mrs. Leslie Carter at the crisis of the third act of *Two Women*. Still, on second thought, this is not a fair criterion, as Mrs. Leslie Carter's plays have usually been written for infantile intellects. This, however, is somewhat beside the immediate issue — the imaginative power of the child mind.

In final rebuttal of the commonly accepted attitude

toward this latter, let me concretely face you with your own case. Travel back across the chasm of Time, and, if you are not a New Yorker and are therefore able to do so, imagine yourself again a youngster of nine with a feather duster tied to your pate and a cake knife in your fist, lying behind a bush in the back yard waiting for little Ignatz, the neighbor's boy, to come around the corner of the woodshed in similar spectacular garb. Imagine yourself imagining yourself to be a Sioux brave ready to scalp little Ignatz, who imagines himself to be a Mohican warrior. And then tell me if — on that distant day — you actually imagined anything. You did not! What you did was nothing more than to make yourself up (so far as the kitchen utensils permitted) to look like some Indian or picture of an Indian you had previously seen, and to disport yourself after the manner of the redmen in the Wild West Show. You imagined nothing. You were you; Ignatz was Ignatz. The fact that you were "playing Indian" did not cause you to imagine you were an Indian any more than the subsequent tumbling to the ground of little Ignatz upon your shout, "You're dead!" caused you to imagine for one moment that little Ignatz had shuffled off this mortal coil.

ON "YOUNG" MR. EDWARD SHELDON

THE lingering impressions of "young" Mr. Edward Sheldon as a playwright are of a gilded bass drum being pounded violently in the still corridors of the Louvre; of the Harvard bleachers singing "*E ascose fibre vanno a carezzare*" from Manon Lescaut in the midst of a football engagement with Yale; of a bunch of violets in a glass of rye whiskey; of Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep played upon the upper octaves of an harmonica; of overalls worn over a pair of modish white flannel trousers.

Let me warn you, however, before I proceed, not to mistake me! Whatever his deficiencies, remittent droll logic, poses and achromatism, whatever his odor of bookshelf adventure, this same Mr. Sheldon is so considerably in advance of the majority of men, young or old, writing for the stage in this country — so considerably ahead of them in the matter of scrivening skill, a courage honest so far as it goes, and a sense of characterization, that he may be forgiven much. The difficulty with Mr. Sheldon, however, is not that he is young (the charge that is regularly lodged against him by those of our newspaper critics who already have one foot in the grave, but who, even in this supposedly enlightened age, are still regarded as authorities on the strength of

the important fact that they can remember having seen Lotta Crabtree at Niblo's Garden in 1864); but that his viewpoint, instead of being analogously young and consequently vivid and sane and vital, is too often old — and consequently both ventriloquistic and erroneous.

He looks upon the realism of modernity with the eyes of a Moritz von Schwind, upon the throbbing romance of modernity with the eyes of a Jean Louis Meissonier. He confuses his paints; his analyses of theme and character are too frequently redolent of the passé analyses and deductions of such archaic revolutionary sans-culottes as the younger Dumas, Victorien Sardou, George Broadhurst, David Belasco, Israel Zangwill, Pierre Wolff, Sydney Grundy, Hall Caine, Henri Bataille, Basil Macdonald Hastings (*The New Sin*, 1912; *Is Suicide a Sin?* by Robert G. Ingersoll, 1885), Wilson Barrett or Henri Lavedan.

He gives one the idea of believing what he reads in books (the first sign of mental old age and correlative sterility of imagination and thought); of holding sex and drama to be invariably synonymous, when the truth is that, in the theatre, sex has some time since to a great degree become comedy. In each and every one of his plays, with the exception of *The High Road* and *The Garden of Paradise* — in *Salvation Nell*, in *The Nigger*, in *The Boss*, in *Egypt*, in *The Princess Zim Zim*, in *Romance* and in *The Song of Songs*, he has figured out his stellar

dramatic moment (or what some of our reporters call the "punch") in terms of a male visiting fierce physical assault upon a female. And, in each instance, the generating impulse of the male has been nothing more than a plump and unemolliated lust. On no occasion has there been fused with this incalculable any comparative intelligence of purpose of the Brioux sort; on no occasion have these deputy climaxes possessed any decenter justification than a titillation of the drooping vertebræ of mild old men and a driving giddy of the cranial contents of very young girls.

Such immedicable proscenium patterns of yesterday as *Shenandoah*, *The Conquerors*, *The Queen of the Highbinders*, and the like, were given to precisely this Sheldon habit; indeed, unless memory errs, the first act of the Bronson Howard specimen, the middle act of the Paul Potter exhibition and the central moment of the quoted melodrama revealed what some of my venerable colleagues are fond of calling "Sheldon's strength" while Mr. Sheldon was still at an age where he said his prayers. Sex, to repeat, has ceased to be dramatic. Nor is passion the synonym of romance. Paul Bourget and Balzac, Weininger and Ellis and a thousand other physicians — if he were still sufficiently young in mind to read them with penetration and constructive inference — would provide Mr. Sheldon much juicy meat for speculation.

Three more items. First, Mr. Sheldon's method

of descriptive sentimental writing. His favorite recipe: "The stars, the perfume of the night breeze, the orange-colored moon, the violets in the fields of St. Germain — the tinkle of a distant mandolin," *et cetera ad infinitum*. What fragrant hackerei! Surely Mr. Sheldon is young enough to know better. Above every other cheaply effective form of writing, this is the easiest; any amateur can do it. I do not except even Henry Van Dyke. The stars, the moon, the flowers and soft music in the distance are a sadly overworked company.

Second, Mr. Sheldon's attempt to invest his writings with a loftier air than actually is theirs by inserting his dialogue in the mouths of important proscenium personages such as governors of States, great newspaper owners, famous painters, leaders of suffrage movements, powerful bankers, noted clergymen and famous opera singers. This coy subterfuge is perfectly transparent and a bit naïve. Certainly, Mr. Sheldon, you are still young enough to realize that the so-regarded important personages of the nation rarely have anything important to say. The drama of life, the shaking logic of life, the pain and the joy of life, come from the John Smiths. Where is there any fresh new thought or fresh new drama to be had from the Roosevelts or the Rockefellers, the Lyman Abbotts or Dr. Parkhursts, the Mrs. O. H. P. Belmonts or the Mary Gardens? Their life stories, their ideas, are of the literary and dramatic past. There is progress and drama only

in the obscure of the world — or in the world's growing children.

Third, Mr. Sheldon's condescending Continental connoisseurish wisdom culled — so is the impression — from the conventional window of the Hotel Bristol in the Place Vendôme; from the conventional cushioned seat of a gondola dreaming its conventional way along the lazy waters of Venice; from the conventional trip through the Musée Carnavalet and the Luxembourg, the conventional taxi voyage through the Bois de Vincennes, the conventional sampling of the *ris de veau à la Toulouse* and of the Haut Brion 1871 in the little garden across the way at Fontainebleau, the conventional view from the Montmartre of "Louise"; and from the conventional pretty, sweet-natured Mademoiselle Ninette of the Marigny promenade or the conventional harder, sterner gaberlunzie of the Boul' Mich' by-ways. All perfectly obvious; of the smell of the guide book, of Stories of the Operas, of Famous Masterpieces of Painting. Any incompetent and unimaginative writer may produce a stirring effect upon the American proletariat by such means, but it is deplorable in so skilled a craftsman, so well educated and well bred a gentleman, as Mr. Sheldon.

STANLEY — EXPLORER OF THE AMAZON

HISTORICAL theatrical dates:

- 600 B. C.— *Astrology discovered by the Greeks.*
- 1912 A. D.— *Astrology discovered by Augustus Thomas.*
- 1855 A. D.— *Theory of the influence of color on the emotions propounded by Herbert Spencer.*
- 1909 A. D.— *Theory of the influence of color on the emotions propounded by Augustus Thomas.*
- 1874 A. D.— *Osteopathy promulgated by Dr. A. T. Still.*
- 1906 A. D.— *Osteopathy promulgated by Augustus Thomas.*
- 1778 A. D.— *Theory of hypnotism advanced by Frederick Anton Mesmer.*
- 1907 A. D.— *Theory of hypnotism advanced by Augustus Thomas.*
- 1905-1915 A. D. inc.— *Theory of hypnotism practiced successfully on dramatic critics and public by David Belasco.*
- 1895 A. D.— *Brieux causes stir in Europe.*
- 1913 A. D.— *Americans discover Brieux is not name of a cheese, as had been suspected.*
- 1880 A. D.— *Strindberg's genius flashes across Europe.*
- 1912 A. D.— *Strindberg discovered by Americans at Berkeley Lyceum.*
- 1870 A. D.— *Wilkie Collins writes Man and Wife.*
- 1912 A. D.— *Hartley Manners thinks it would make a timely play.*

220 ANOTHER BOOK ON THE THEATRE

1868 A. D.—*George Marion born.*

1868 A. D.—*George Marion stops having new ideas on the staging of musical plays.*

? B. C.—*Eve appears in public undressed.*

1907 A. D.—*Ziegfeld produces the first Follies.*

1881 A. D.—*Klaw and Erlanger begin to improve theatrical conditions in America.*

1881 A. D.—*The public begins to swear at Klaw and Erlanger.*

1620 A. D.—*The era of the George V. Hobart play.*

1876 A. D.—*Stanley explores the Congo.*

1912 A. D.—*Stanley explores the Amazon.*

There are at least three unfailing ways in which any particularly incompetent playwright may deeply impress our professional dramatic critics. First, the playwright must exercise the precaution to be born in England. Second, he must be careful to have no ideas and must place this lack of ideas in the mouths of perfectly obvious Welsh or Irish or Scotch or British provincial types or characters, thus achieving what the critics will call a "genre study." Third, if he desires to be hailed as "daring," all he has to do is to have his heroine seduced, and then, when his climax comes, have the young baggage put on a shawl and quote a defense for herself at the top of her voice from Havelock Ellis without putting in the quotation marks. Other infallible ways are for the dramatist to write Sudermann's *Johannisfeuer* or *Heimat* or Maeterlinck's *Monna Vanna*, having a care, however, to change the title; to get

Mrs. Fiske to play the thing, or, if not successful in this direction, at least to get Mrs. Thomas Whiffen to play the part of the mother; to keep a weather eye on the all-important lighting effects; and not to look too much like Sydney Rosenfeld. The late Mr. Stanley Houghton, in brief, impressed the critics.

Stanley's play, *Hindle Wakes*, which evoked much mental violence and copious bedizened, encomiastical adjectives on the part of many of the frigbeards of Britain when it was produced by the Horniman mummers of Manchester, appears to me the most indecently over-estimated product that has come to us out of England since Arnold Bennett. A polite anterior glance at its virtues discloses little else than a first rate plenary disregard for the pish-mince called "dramatic construction," and a fair eye to the inherent differentiating nooscopic attitudes, in certain matters, of the male and female. Beyond these, *Hindle Wakes* is absolutely nothing more than our own David Graham Phillips' play of the old Madison Square Theatre days, *The Worth of a Woman*, with the scene set in Lancashire instead of Indiana — save that the British piece is not nearly so thematically valid as the latter. The trouble with Stanley is that he thinks and talks like Snappy Stories, meanwhile imagining with the aid of the critics that he is promulgating Something Big on the Sex Question. The further trouble with Stanley lies in the fact that like many other young men,

he believes that he is not given to sentimentality merely because he refrains from using sentimental words. The truth is that, although widely stamped as a "frank, fearless looker upon life," this Stanley is as soppy a bawl-brother as I have engaged with in quite a time. And the second truth is that, although characterized as a person of "bold viewpoint toward sex matters," this same playwright is bold only in the sense that he has dared put forth dog-eared and perfectly false cajoleries anent amazons as new ideas.

The macaronic vacuity and stultiloquence of the alleged big moment in the exhibit, a scene whose "fierce vital logic" (as one of them expressed it) turned several erstwhile sane London critics into piskashishes, may be conveyed without an undue flow of perspiration. An adolescent girl meets on a Bank Holiday with an adolescent Don Juan. * * * More asterisks. * * * Discovery by parents. "He must right the wrong he has done her by making her his wife." * * * "Very well; I will." * * * then the girl, thus: "But I will not marry *him*! It was my fun as much as his! He's been forced into marrying me, because he really loves Beatrice Farrar. You call him a blackguard and now you want me to marry a blackguard and reform him. I want a *real* man. I want to be a free woman!" In effect, just this. Nothing more.

What sweetish, highly lacquered pish; what old-fashioned facetious immateriality; what elegant popgunnery! Where Phillips, a thinking man, manipu-

lated the basic elements of this same theme adroitly and with a show of cool reason, Stanley has merely theatricalized it and, by inoculating it with an unconscious but none the less present sentimentalism and with an ignorance of organic chemistry, has reduced it to terms of college boy caterwaul, purple-cravated iconoclasm, lukewarm pseudo-sex-socialism. The girl pretends to refuse to marry the young man, despite the slight evasion, on the ground that he is a blackguard. Inasmuch as by her own tongue he is no more the blackguard than she, and inasmuch, to boot, as the young fellow is logically quite the "real man" in every sense, is this not pure rouge-stick walla-walla? With the girl's charge that, anyway, the young man loves another, we behold the entrance of the slaying, consuming sentimentality, a mouthing on the girl's part that definitively kills her "free woman" rant on the spot. And any physician will bear out the contention that Fanny Hawthorne's "big speech" and defense of her position based on the assertion that the amusement of the liaison was mutual amounts to nothing but theatrical soshpudding of the spooniest order. I seem to be losing my patience — I, who once even sat through Mr. Hartley Manners's piece *The Indiscretion of Truth*, to any speech in the stilty dialogue of which one might have signed "yours truly" and had a letter. Stanley's soupçon, "I want to be a free woman," analyzed, means next to nothing. It is just a dainty little quasi-suffrage startler thrown

across the footlights to what female doodles happen to be out front. In short, this main episode upon which his entire play rests, and for which it has been decked with bays and studded garters, is Shaw granvillebarkerd, everyday common sense pierrelotid, the New York *Journal* ringlinged, theatricalism theatricalized — it is revolutionary in the sense that Ella Wheeler Wilcox is revolutionary; it is daring in the sense that an illustrated advertisement of ladies' underwear is daring.

There is material for a more than moderately interesting drama on this topic, but Mr. Houghton and his oblique sitting-room cynicism were scarcely the twain to cope with it. Fanny Hawthorne might find for herself a defense (if that be the word), and build to a truly worth-while climacteric dramatic scene, in the pages of the celebrated English pathologist Almroth Wright, in the utterances of the awe-inspiring Diane de Poitiers of the heart of Henri II, in the lamentations of the sophisticated mistress of Louis XIV, or in the retorts and rapier thrusts of Pompadour and of naughty Montespan. Or she might find an excellent flaunting, devoid of all Houghtonese sophistry, in what has been left us by Madame de la Tour, by Jules Janin and Beaumelle. Or in the pages of Wedekind's *Hidalla*. Or in the blood heating thrills of *Tristan and Isolde*. Or in a slender book by Helen Woljeska called *A Woman's Confessional*. Or in the cutting slashes of the angelically ferocious Madame Rachel. Or in the

trembling Evening Star of Tannhäuser. Or, if she were conversant with ancient Greek psychophysical documents, in the green foods with which her parents had economically and unthinkingly overfed her. Or in an adaptation of the psychological records of instinctive action, such, for example, as my excellent old tutor Professor Edward Bradford Titchener used to illustrate in the case of the cage-reared migrant that beats its wings against its cage at the approach of winter in its endeavor to fly south, although it has never flown south.

ON "SPICY" DRAMA

FOR years, every now and again in the publicity bulletins of plays and novels there has confronted my vision the description adjective "spicy." And for years I have enlisted my fullest intelligence to penetrate to its exact meaning. Recourse to the dictionary:

Spicy, a. Fragrant, aromatic, piquant, smart.

Examination of the works themselves has failed to reveal to me any qualities that seemed appropriately to be described by the word or its synonyms. If a husband discovers that his wife has been making eyes at the coachman, I fail to see how the fiction effect is either fragrant or aromatic. If a model tells an artist that she cannot marry him but that she will become his mistress, I fail to deduce how the thing is either piquant or smart. Had the model told the artist that she would *not* become his mistress, we should, indeed, have had something both piquant and smart, but certainly not as the matter stands. The whole case has baffled me. I have been told that "spicy" means "naughty." But in place of naughtiness, I have found stupidity — and naughtiness is never stupid, save when persons are given to affectations or live in poor quarters or cannot under-

stand the Japanese point of view. Paris and Binghamton, N. Y., are the only two communities I have ever visited where the word "spicy" has seemed to be least abused and where its definition has seemed most satisfactorily unveiled for me. In Paris, "spicy" refers only to the effect of an acute delineation of the emotions and actions of apt human beings when the policeman is on the beat. In American literature of stage and library, what is termed "spicy" is often merely the portrayal of the emotions and actions of dunderheads when the policeman is *not* on the beat. In other words, when an American writer wishes his characters to be "spicy" he usually succeeds only in making them lawless; while the Frenchman never forgets for an instant that in life it is silly and foolish and unsafe to break the law when you can bribe the policeman.

ON CRITICS

THERE are two ways in which a critic may procure for himself a reputation for trustworthiness and rationality. The one way is to concur consistently in the public's momentary mental attitudes; the other is to abide stanchly and unremittingly by the public's fondled traditions. For a man who earns his living by criticism, who looks upon criticism as a routine office occupation, like bookkeeping or cleaning inkwells, these ways are by all means the wisest and safest to pursue. Not only do they preclude the possibility of one's losing one's source of livelihood, as well as the probability of frequent callings to account by disgruntled advertisers, but in addition they secure for the critic the position and adulation that is the plump portion of all who, to speak generally, appreciate that a gentle appraisal of *Years of Discretion* is the better part of valor and that *Eva*, with all its faults, looked at from another point of view is "Ave"—all hail!

There are two ways in which a critic may win for himself a reputation for prejudice and dubious judgment. The one way is unsentimentally to accept things mainly for what they are worth; the other is unemotionally to express the opinions thus deduced. These latter ways are provocative of large

and passionate discomfort. In the first place, they are certain to bring down upon the critic's head the stigmatizing crimination of youthfulness. In the second place, they are logically certain to invest the critic with an odious air of attempting to be spectacularly original. And, in the third place, they may in due time succeed in alienating him from his sustaining loaf and jug. For these excellent reasons, the latter practices are to be approached cautiously and not without some bonny misgivings. Had Bernard Shaw been an American, he would undoubtedly have been put back on general reportorial work (probably assigned to cover the Ohio Society's banquet) the afternoon after his first gutting criticism (of Grundy's *Slaves of the Ring*) appeared in the paper. Had Sarcey been an American, his refusal of the Legion of Honor, on the ground that its acceptance might influence his critical honesty in the future, unquestionably would have been looked upon by the public and his colleagues as merely a gaudy stratagem to conceal his dishonesty in some other unsuspected direction.

The metempirical attitude toward dramatic criticism is a strange and awesome coccus. It labors in devious manners its machinery to massage. In France, for instance, the attitude is such that any critic who writes of Hervieu unfavorably will at no time and under no circumstances be received into the Academy. Inasmuch as almost all the French newspaper critics are known publicly to be unchaste

(many of them, like Pierre Wolff, de Flers, Felix Duquesnel and Pierre Veber are admittedly merely press agents for one another's wares; de Flers even went so far as to persuade his present employer to discharge the regular critic so that he, de Flers, might assume the post and thus see to it that his own plays did not lack sufficient praise), what criticism of comparative worth there is in Gaul is limited to the periodical publications. And in the latter, only that modern criticism that is pilfered bodily from Geoffroy's elaborate *Cours de Littérature Dramatique*, written about eighty years ago, is regarded as fearless, constructive and sane. The policy of hush is beloved of the Gauls. Only that which is favorable to the dramatic scribes of La Belle France is regarded as honest criticism. Thus, although even to a child's eye it was evident that the Russian influence of Tolstoi in the theme of forgiveness for adultery, of the woman's right to happiness, was to be clearly observed in the French drama of the last years of the nineteenth century and more recently in *Le Pardon* of Lemaître, in *La Déserteuse* of Brioux, in *Le Berçail* of Bernstein, in the *Colibri* of Bataille, it was the rule of public opinion in France that, for reasons of patriotism, the fact should be perfumed with critical silence.

In England, the public expects of its present critics that they devote themselves more assiduously to the cultivation of actors' reputations than to the cultivation of drama. The actor is considered very

gravely in England. Indeed, he is at times even looked upon as being of some help to the art of the drama. As we over here only vaguely know, the British public also expects of its theatrical commentators that they greet with condescension any foreign products (especially American) that are offered up for their august inspection. I say "only vaguely know" because, despite the speech that comes periodically into contact with our tympani, it is not so much the British critic who is hostile to imported wares as it is his reading public. The British critic is, on the whole, a moderately enlightened member of the guild—but he is a very, very circumspect member. He values his reputation even more greatly than a demi-mondaine values hers. He knows well that even the American Charles Klein is a more apt theatrical plumber than the British Horace Vachell—that *The Third Degree* (or *Find the Woman*, as it was called overseas) is a more interesting exhibition than Jelf's a block away; yet he knows just as well that it would be silly for him to say so. And, with a weather eye to his standing in the community, he shelters himself under the cover of the two practices wherefrom reputations may be coaxed as nicely in the long shadows of Nelson's column as in the long shadows of Longacre Square.

ON MONCKTON HOFFE'S DIALOGUE

WHATEVER may be the deficiencies of Mr. Monckton Hoffe in the matter of playwriting, it remains that he possesses the faculty of inventing what is known on Broadway as "unnatural, no good" dialogue and what is, therefore, dialogue at once natural and very good. This Broadway and, via Broadway, theatrical American attitude toward and conception of what constitutes good dramatic dialogue is a strange and awesome emotion. If one were to appraise American human beings by the ritual of their conversation as that ritual has been superimposed upon us by the majority of financially successful American dramatic writers, it would inevitably follow:

1. That it is not "natural" for an American to speak save in slang.
2. That it is "unnatural" for an American to be witty.
3. That it is not "natural" for an American ever to speak save in "short, crisp, snappy" sentences.
4. That it is "unnatural" for an American to speak a pure, grammatical English.
5. That an American only speaks "naturally" when he speaks in terms of "laughs."

Of course this contention on the part of the financially successful American dramatic writers is by no

means so absurd as it may appear. It has, indeed, a considerable foundation of truth. But, as I have endeavored time and again to show, is it, in view of this fact, not the duty of our playwrights with dreams other than pelf (and should not one have such dreams once one has achieved the pelf?) — is it not their duty to entertain us in the theatre (when they seek to manipulate American characters presumed to be rational, educated and mentally alert) with characters that speak something above the vulgar and arid jargon of grillrooms, dancing restaurants and cheap clubs?

Hoffe, as I say, presents to our ear dialogue that neither drives us from the *fauteuils* with a laborious "building up of laughs" nor drives us down upon our spines with an equally laborious artillery of so-called "clever," and hence stupid, epigrams. He gives us a set of mortals who, realizing they are characters in a comedy, convince us with rippling, fruity examples of the *best* wit of the different classes of society to which they are supposed to belong. Thus, when Hoffe shows us, let us say, the witty racetrack scamp (as he does in a recent play) he does not, as would our American playwrights, offer us the speech of the racetrack scamp of average racetrack scamp wit (which is little or no wit), but the speech of the *wittiest* member of the racetrack scamp class. Is not this what we may demand in comedy and farce comedy? And is not this the only manner in which genuine comedy (I am speaking of

comedy in the best sense) may be developed? Certainly it is. We have only to examine the best comedies and the methods of the creators of these best comedies quickly to believe it.

THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME SPINE

ON such occasions when one of my old boyhood friends comes to visit with me or when I discover myself becoming much interested in some new girl or when I am invited out to dine — in other words, when misfortune seizes me — I find I may always rely on the attitude of our middle class (which is to say our theatregoers) toward the transient mummer drama to provide me with an antiseptic horse-laugh.

Some months ago, there came to us out of Germany a ridiculous vaudevillian, one Schaeffer — in his home land a mere entertainer of small children — who was promptly hailed by our local critical Solomons as “the most versatile genius in the world.” Thus the jaunty superlative, the dripping of the spectacular saliva. As a matter of record, this fellow is no more the genius than Marceline, plain clown, no more versatile than any number of men one is able quickly to summon to mind. I myself (an unaccomplished person) am able to do everything this absurd Schaeffer does with the exception of rolling a cigarette with one hand and balancing a papier-maché chariot, which two feats I happen never to have tried. As against the latter, however, I venture a contract for six or seven exploits that would simply stagger the poor fellow. I have

somehow always regarded versatility, though, as a word intended to dignify something a bit more elevated than performing the trick of pulling ribbons out of a person's mouth (a "trick" one may buy for fifty cents in any "magic outfit" establishment) and daubing a nice clean canvas with a barber-shop landscape and a red-orange sunset.

I project Schaeffer merely as an illustration of the viewpoint of the local connoisseurs, our *landsturm* of art and letters. And I proceed a bit more pertinently to a play called Under Cover. Here the specimen of melodrama that one inevitably comes to read of the next morning as "thrilling." What is this "thrilling" of which we so regularly hear? This devastating siege of the native spine, this vertebræ-shivering sdruciolamento? Let us see. Is it a sensation imparted by the audition or spectacle of something mentally rousing? Something stimulating to an adult neither soft-witted nor drunk? Certainly not. The native spine, as the theatrically experienced George M. Cohan and I once in collaboration sought to point out, is tickled into a condition of trembling awe only by the sudden switching out of a chandelier, the shooting off of a blank cartridge and the sight of a twenty-dollar-a-week actor in a policeman's uniform. That spine, on the other hand, which hopes in the American theatre to be thrilled by the delicate humor of a Schnitzler, the quick satire of a Thoma or Fulda, the fancy of a Rittner or Ettlinger, the sharp wit of a Rip and

Bousquet, the laughing thought of a Molnar, is a spine destined to a lonely and a hopeless, a forlorn and a disappointed dream.

When, in this melodrama of Mr. Roi Cooper Megrue's, the Secret Service hero suddenly grabs a gun away from the villain and turns the tables on the latter, my spine somehow experiences a thrill of not one-thousandth the magnitude it receives from such a simple dialogic line as "Life is a prison, without bars," spoken by Lord George in that melodious short play of Beerbohm's. When Mr. Megrue's heroine is trapped by the scoundrel of a customs chief, my spine somehow doesn't respond one two-thousandths as much as it seems to when Shaw's Cæsar speaks, "Come, Cleopatra: forgive me and bid me farewell; and I will send you a man, Roman from head to heel and Roman of the noblest; not old and ripe for the knife, not lean in the arms and cold in the heart, not hiding a bald head under his conqueror's laurels, not stooped with the weight of the world on his shoulders, but brisk and fresh, strong and young, hoping in the morning, fighting in the day, and revelling in the evening. Will you take such an one in exchange for Cæsar?" And when Mr. Megrue's pretty hero breaks the glass of the burglar-alarm box in the dark and the clangor brings the household to his aid, my cheap spine somehow does not tingle nearly so much as when the palpitating wisp of a queen bids of Cæsar the Roman's name and Cæsar lightly returns, "Shall it be Mark

Antony?" Ah, but then — I am a queer and an outlandish fellow. And the things I like, few others do like. And what need for Mr. Megrue to care what pleases lonely me so long as his play thrills the proletariat by the gallon?

The simple business is this: the mob is and can be thrilled in the theatre only by the display of antique and hence familiar stratagems — which stratagems, however, the playwright must exercise great caution to render less valid and effective than were they in their original incarnations. This process results in plays which the mob calls "novel." Thus, the "big" scene in *Under Cover*, wherein the handsome hero locks all the doors of his boudoir and informs the heroine-in-a-nightdress that he is going to keep her there *all night* unless she tells him who, why, et cetera, is our old friend the "big" scene between Pinero's gay Lord Quex and Sophy Fullgarney. Thus the "surprise" at the end of the play wherein the supposed smuggler turns out to be a detective is of the same "surprise" cast as brought a curtain down on Richard Harding Davis' *Ranson's Folly* (produced some twelve or thirteen years ago) and as was presented to us in a play by Maurice Baring. Thus the missing Jack-in-the-box necklace device harks back to distant Sardou's *Scrap of Paper*. Thus the girl-in-the-secret-service set by the powers against the man-she-has-come-to-love is out of Helen Ware's play of three years ago, *The Deserters*, and out of a round dozen before it. Thus the sudden-

dark-scene-and-escape-with-subsequent-popping-in-at-other-door is Officer 666, Stop Thief, u. s. w. And so it goes.

And so it goes!

ON THE SLAPSTICK

ONE night in the Year of our Lord 1896, a tall, thin man walked out upon the stage of a Broadway theatre, followed by a little fat man. Of a sudden the tall, thin man wheeled about and deliberately poked his forefinger into the eye of the little fat man. Instantly a bombilation of laughter surged over the auditorium. Men literally shook and rocked and rolled in the violence of their mirth. Women shouted and screamed and went hysterical in an uncontrollable ecstasy of merriment. One spectator actually ruptured a blood vessel out of sheer glee. Nose glasses were hurled off their respective bridges by the abrupt rebellion of the muscles of melancholia and were shattered into many pieces. Tears of transport welled up in waves, and the prodigious flood of cachinnation was dammed only by the final advent of physical weakness.

One night some sixteen years later (March, 1912), the same tall, thin man walked out upon the stage of a Broadway theatre, followed by the same little fat man. Of a sudden the same tall, thin man wheeled about and deliberately poked his forefinger into the eye of the same little fat man. Instantly a brother bombilation of laughter surged over the auditorium. Men again literally shook and rocked

and rolled in the violence of their mirth. Women again shouted and screamed and went hysterical in an uncontrollable ecstasy of merriment. Long minutes passed before the audience recovered, before its laughter was spent, before it was able again to contain itself. And Weber and Fields had once more — and beyond all question — established the fact that, when all has been said and done, no form of humor, be it the farcical drollery of a Hoyt, the insinuating and delicious satirical twistings of a Barrie or a Synge, or the wily jestings of a Bahr or a Molnar, is so appealing to American and other susceptibilities as that invested in a direct pedal assault upon the seat of another man's pants, in the sticking of a finger into his retina, in a propelling of the stomachial muscles against the protruding paunch of one's fellow with force sufficient to knock the latter off his feet, or in some other such excruciatingly comical pain-breeding stratagem.

The slapstick has had many muckrakers. I, in my younger days, have been one of its handsomest assailants. Indeed, I still am. But truth compels the chronicle that I, in company with every other reviewer in the land, am frequently a hypocrite in this matter of humor — that is, when it comes to writing about it. It is expected of the conscientious critic that he deplore the humor of the swash of the air-puffed bladder, the swat of the rolled newspaper and the "it's raining" of the conversational drizzle. It is expected of him that he ply his pen in vigorous

pleading for the nativity of a general appreciation of a finer, more literary, more respectable Molièorean shape of humor. Upon his shoulders, so he is fondly persuaded to believe, rests the rescuing of the theatre from such of its abysmal sins. To laugh at a man falling on his face? Horrors! To be jocular at the sight of a so-called comedian tweaking the nose of another? Mercy, mercy! And yet it remains, dolorific as it may be and in all faith is, that that same grandiose critic, being a human being in spite of himself and his job, guffaws and holds intestinal jubilee almost every time a pickle-herring or merry Andrew of the stage pulls another's whiskers or imprints upon his companion's hinter anatomy a great toe. There is, forsooth, good reason for this. There is good reason why slapstick humor, above every other form of humor, commands our laughter, albeit against our wills. And herewith, its fugitive defense.

The basis of all humor is pain — that is, pain of a not too deep nature suffered by another. Every really effective jest, witty observation, facetious satire in the world's history has been grounded on the discomfiture and troubles in one direction or another — mental, physical, financial or what not — of a fellow man. This is the greatest joke the Book-maker ever saw fit to play on us, His children. He fashioned our hearts so that they would weep at the beholding or hearing of suffering, and our minds

plus our eyes plus our stomachs plus our ears — four to one — so that they would scream in fine glee at the same thing. Thus is it four to one that we will laugh at him who falls on the icy pavement, at him who bumps his kneecap against a chair in the dark, at the pink-eye, at the headache of the morning after, at the youngster with the green apple abdominal pains, at the woman with shoes too tight, at the bronchial hoarseness of yon fellow's voice, at him who has just lost a five-dollar bill, at him who has been gold-bricked, at him who while shaving has cut himself with the razor, at the person who is thrown to the floor by a sudden lurch of the street car, at the drunken, tottering bum in imminent danger of cracking his skull, at any one who steps on a tack, sits on a pin or gets married — in brief, at each of these and thousands of other equally unfortunate and quite unhumorous personal calamities.

The slapstick is the symbol, the dramatization *in parvo*, the juice of the boiled meat of unhappiness and pain. As it comes into forceful and audible contact with Meyer Bockheister's pants, being directed thither by the chubby fists of Michael Dillpickle, it shoots into our minds not only the highly pleasant and laugh provoking thought that Mr. Bockheister has been made to suffer a temporary stinging sensation of large discomfort, but it suggests such additionally ravishing humors as the possibility of Mr. Bockheister finding a fine red welt there in the

morning, and of his being compelled to partake of nutriment in an upright position. To those of us who are blessed with better imaginations than our neighbors, and who are thereby able to glean twice as many grounds for laughter out of the episode, there occurs also the delicious potentiality that Mr. Bockheister's trousers might have been torn by the severe blow, thus necessitating the purchase against his will of a new pair, together with the chance that Mr. Bockheister may be able to grab the slapstick away from his aggressor and play a return sonata on the suburban section of the trousers containing Mr. Dillpickle. Anticipation of pain multiplied thus adds to the jocoseness of the occasion.

That Mr. Bockheister did nothing to warrant the slapstick attack upon his person makes the humor of that attack all the more delightful, because human nature is such that it enjoys seeing people get, *not* what is coming to them, as the saying has it, but in seeing them get what is *not* coming to them. Of course our mouths deny this, but our heads tell us it is the world's philosophy — and perfectly true. All forms of humor allied with the slapstick produce the same effects in us. We are brought up on the humor of the circus clown who trips himself up in the sawdust ring and lands on his ear, and who runs headlong into his fellow clown and stands the latter on his head. And the "kid" of us remains in us eternally. Humor of a more delicate fiber may win our smiles and flirt with our brains, but it takes the

cruder humor of the chin whisker, the stomach pad, the swishing, swashing slapstick and their blood-relatives to make us let go and launch ourselves into fêtes of prolonged ventral joy.

ONE VIEW OF TWO PLAYS

THE nature of the American is such that he is quick to view as fact anything that is all fiction and equally quick to deny as at all possible of existence anything that is part fiction. Mr. George Scarborough wrote and caused to be produced a play given the title *The Lure*, a play whose theme, as I have heretofore observed, was derived with a whoop from the white slave mythology so popular and persuasive at the moment. Being wholly fable, so far as its intent, generalization and thematic vitality went, the play was hailed by the cognoscenti of the press as "searching in its truthful and vivid portrayal of an existing and terrifying state of affairs." Of the piece, indeed, the reviewer for *The New York Evening Sun* went so far as to record: "From first to last, it rings true! . . . The truest act since the big act of *The Easiest Way*! . . . Its sincerity something which cannot be denied. . . . It strikes a big, timely and human note. . . . Covers whole white slave question honestly!" This same Mr. Scarborough subsequently produced a piece called *The Last Resort*, the theme of which was derived (true enough, with no less a whoop than in the previous instance) from the disclosures that brought about the genesis of the movement concerning the recall

of judges, but a theme none the less which carried at bottom a truth as truthful as the falsity of that of *The Lure* was false.

What happened? Because his thesis was melodramatized with a somewhat more conspicuous laying on of paprika externals than he had negotiated in the case of his earlier play, and because his theme was thus caused more transparently to exhale the vapors of part-fiction instead of, as in his previous work, deftly repressing the complete thematic fiction, the entire shebang, good and bad lumped together, was committed to the lunacy ward.

It would appear to the lay eye that the chief trouble with Mr. Scarborough as a writer for the theatre is that he possesses an unmistakable knack for the theatre. Which is to say that he thinks in terms of heroes and villains, "punches" and "suspense," thrilling denouements and telling "curtains." From such a mind, whatever drama emanates must inevitably bear the plague spots of artificiality and hyperbole. Mr. Scarborough is by Charles Klein out of Owen Davis. His characters are not human — even *before* the actors begin impersonating them. His characters seem to say while they are delivering the playwright's lines: "Pretty zippy dialogue old Scarborough has given us, don't you think?" His "curtains," as the stage argot has it, "plant" themselves so speciously that their effect is gone before they arrive. His heroes are so ungovernably heroic that, by five minutes to

nine, every discriminating person in the audience is rooting for the villains. And his villains are so consistently villainous that, beside them, even Paul Armstrong's celebrated dirty workers take on the visage of angels of heaven. Many a possibly valid theme, such as the one presented in his *Last Resort*, is Scarborough destined to devastate if he persists in adhering to this Broadway theatrical ritual, the ritual which orders that all life be seen through the glasses of "what will go in the theatre," the ritual that thinks from the stage back to life instead of from life toward the stage. The ritual, in short, that would define, let us say, Socialism as "Any theory or system of social organization which would abolish, entirely or in great part, the individual effort and competition on which modern society rests, and substitute for it coöperative action, would introduce a more perfect and equal distribution of the products of labor, would make land and capital, as the instruments and means of production, the joint possession of the members of the community, and would cause Jane Cowl to love George Fawcett and marry him in the last act."

The story materials of *The Last Resort* begin with the corruption of a trial judge by a rapsallion of a corporation lawyer, said corporation being desirous of sequestering a particularly active legal opponent in jail. The scene changes to the courtroom and we observe the subsidized member of the bench provoking the objectionable party — who is

our little hero — into an open contempt of court, thereupon consigning him by way of punishment to serve sentence. Our hero takes an appeal, and we next find ourselves in the private consultation room of the Appellate Court, six weeks later. Attention to the plot is here temporarily interrupted by the presence on the scene, in an otherwise unimportant rôle of court stenographer, of an awfully pretty little blonde girl with wonderful blue eyes. After a while, several minutes after this rare creature has made her exit, one begins to notice that there have been present all the time two other characters. It presently obtrudes upon one that these two characters are judges of the higher court, equally as corrupt as was our accommodating friend of the first act. The rapsallion of a corporation lawyer enters and persuades the two bad men to keep our hero in the lock-up. Then — bismillah! — out of a telephone booth near by steps our little heroine. She has heard ALL — not merely all, mind you, but ALL! Being an old hand at melodramas, however, we immediately realize that it will do neither our heroine nor our hero much good — this having heard ALL, that is — because our old friend “suspense” will demand that our heroine be arbitrarily thwarted by the villains so as to tide the audience over to the next act. In this next act, our hero is elected governor of the State and, losing his head in the excitement of the moment, asks our heroine to marry him. Inasmuch, therefore, as his troubles are now about

to start with doubled force, this constitutes a happy ending.

*

Along Came Ruth, an adaptation of Fonson and Wicheler's *La Demoiselle de Magazin*, is of the depressing species of theatrical entertainment generally described as "wholesome" — obviously meaning, so far as one can make out, full of holes. It is the invariable custom of our theatrical appraisers to designate as wholesome any play (1) that is laid in the country and has a rainstorm for a "curtain" to one of its acts; (2) that contains the spectacle of a little girl at death's door begging her grief-stricken mother not to be sad because "I'm goin' to get well an' strong again, mamma; the doctor tol' me so," when the audience has been apprised that there is no hope for the invalid; (3) that contains several touching references to Christmas; (4) that discloses the fact in the last act that the little heroine is not an illegitimate child after all, her father having duly married her mother before he left on that fatal trip to sea; and (5) that does not imperil the heroine's physical chastity. It is, of course, a vital essential of all of these "wholesome" dramas that they prevent their audiences from thinking, their wholesomeness being proportioned to their proficiency in this direction. A study of the New York newspaper critiques of the last twelve years uncovers the intelligence that only once has the adjective

“wholesome” been employed therein to describe the work of a first rate or even second or third rate dramatist, the flattery having been reserved exclusively for the output of the metaphysicians of piffle. The one exception noted occurred in the instance of Barrie’s *Peter Pan*. Who in this land has heard of a Shaw play described as wholesome? Or a Galsworthy play (even *The Pigeon*)? Or a play by Schmidt, Walter, Bahr, Molnar, Pinero, Hauptmann, Schnitzler, Brieux, Sudermann, Giacosa, Echegaray?

Along Came Ruth is evidently “wholesome” by virtue of the fifth clause in the critical book of rules — the corporeal sacrosanctity of our heroine. Our heroine is a superficial, hence amiably natured, little baggage who comes as clerk in Act I to a village store in Maine, and before you can say Jack Robinson — or, in this case, Winchell Smith — succeeds in transforming the store into an emporium and the village into a metropolis. On the stage, the only thing that can be reformed more quickly than a down-at-the-heel store or village is a criminal. The first act scene of the Fonson-Wicheler adaptation is laid in “Hubbard’s furniture shop in Oldport, Maine,” and the second, according to the programme, in the “Hubbard-Bradford department store,” but, actually, in the palace of the Crown Prince of Saxon-borgia or some such erstwhile Savage musical comedy setting. This managerial habit of resorting so frequently to the storehouse for scenery may well

be applauded on the ground of economy, but it is rather disconcerting to an audience's powers of imagination. Not long ago, for instance, while witnessing a play produced by Mr. William A. Brady and called *Don't Weaken*, I found myself waiting impatiently for the entrance of Grace George. Unable finally to contain my disquietude, I begged of the man with me a possible reason for the actress's delayed appearance. "But," said he, glancing at his playbill and making certain, "Grace George is not in the cast." I smiled, indulgent at the fellow's ignorance. "Ho!" I exclaimed. "You can't fool me! Grace George is *always* in this scene!"

Finding nothing in *Along Came Ruth* as a play to hold my attention, I devoted the period spent in the cozy, warm theatre (it was very cold out of doors) to speculating upon several irrelevant but highly interesting philosophies. Thus, during the first of the three acts, I brought myself to the conclusion that the reason for the large financial success of such plays as *Damaged Goods* and the like is to be found fundamentally in the one psychologic fact that they provide, through the articulation of a word or words generally hushed by the edict of conventionality, the aural stimulus — the ear shock — the sound concussion — the ear emotion — with which the public has been unable previously to gratify its auditory sense. That is to say, where the theatregoing public has had its cardiac and ocular sensations and emotions provided for by the managers, where it has

been able to find and in due time to tire of heart and eye thrills (induced respectively, for example, by such exhibits as Madame X and the Hippodrome shows), it has not until lately been provided with ear thrills. (Music is to be excepted as, remember, it is only of drama we are here treating!) When, therefore (as I figured out while Ruth was selling a big order of furniture to old Captain Hodge, the village grouch), there is given to the public a play containing such a tympanum stimulus as is contained in the direction against the ear drum of the hitherto unspoken word "syphilis," the public will rush to the play to receive that sensation as it would rush, does and has rushed, to such exhibits as the Ziegfeld Follies to receive new physical stimuli.

During the second act (while young Allan Hubbard was beseeching Ruth to be his wife and while Ruth, who loved him greatly, was refusing him on the ground that there had to be a third act), I ruminated over the abject futility of any and all attempts to establish "atmosphere" in the minds of a theatre audience before the rise of the curtain. By conveying thus in advance to the audience the sound of birds singing in the woodland, the sound of rain and thunder, or something of the sort, that is. Never once has such an attempt been successful. Why this should be so, I was unable to figure out because the traffic on the stage was making too much noise. Belasco, in his theatre in Forty-fourth Street West, accomplishes more in the way of guar-

anteeing the mood of his audiences through the simple expedient of preserving a gentle quiet in the house, a sense of expectant hush, than have any of his colleagues with their attempts toward establishing an ante-curtain mood through such preliminary "atmospheric" bosh as a character playing the piano or some darkies singing in the distance. No "atmosphere" on earth is powerful enough to push its way through the drop curtain.

During the last act (while old Papa Hubbard was provoking the audience to great mirth by stimulating a condition of intoxication), I set myself to wondering why it never occurs to our more discerning stage producers to command their actor charges in rehearsal to refrain from indulging in the nine hundred and ninety-nine of the usual thousand mummer gestures that assault an audience's optic nerve during the course of almost every play given to the public. Aside from the patent fact that this ceaseless gesturing diminishes to no inconsiderable extent the verisimilitude of a play, does it not occur to the producers that the only persons who make use of gestures are persons deficient in the power of intelligent expression — or Polacks and political speakers, which amounts to the same thing? Forasmuch as actors — I am speaking of plays in general — are supplied with this power of expression by the playwright, where the need of gestures? One gesture, to be sure, sometimes emphasizes a point; but two gestures, just as surely, obfuscate it. When a person

off the stage catches sight of the lunar body and remarks, "Isn't the moon beautiful to-night?" does he accompany his observation with an elaborate maneuver with his anterior limb? Not unless he is drunk! Why then, when an actor is called upon to execute a similar remark in a play, should it be necessary for him, in order to impress his audience, to indulge in the elaborate *delsarte* of a Bremen *kapellmeister*? Let us lay all such motions on the table!

ON THE CYCLE NONSENSE

FOR some time now, our theatrical managers have been waving verbs in the pages of the daily gazettes to the general effect that the romantic drama is due soon to reappear. Here, one of our managers' most promiscuous amusements. Every year they indulge themselves in gratuitous elocution conveying the idea that such and such a style of drama is now temporarily done for and that such and such another style of drama is bound soon again to come to the surface of popularity. In the dissemination of this fragrant buncombe, the managers are assisted in weeks when there is nothing worth while to write about by some of our more celebrated theatrical commentators.

In other words, there is still left in our civilization a considerable quorum of stanch souls who gabble about "cycles," just as there is a copious group that still calls all harsh, grim plays like *Rutherford and Son* by the term "relentless" when, in reality, they are intrinsically and logically not a whit more relentless (or "ruthless," to quote a synonym frequently used) than light, pleasant plays like *Our Wives* or *The Concert*. Relentless means other things than last-act breaking up of homes, suicides and the like. Love, consider, is as relentless, as ruthless, as hate.

Habit is as relentless, as ruthless, as a steely selfishness. The Incubus is ten times as "relentless" and "ruthless" as Rutherford; and the former is light satirical comedy. The sun is a thousand times more relentless than the thunder of the storm. Only it doesn't seem to be. The only thoroughly relentless thing in the world of drama, as in the world of actual life, is the inconsistency of human nature. Whenever the critical confraternity perspires "relentless" panegyrics upon a play of the order of Rutherford, you may be sure that, however excellent the rest of the play may be, it is defective in the blatant and uncompromising — and consequently unauthentic — consistency of its central figure's nature — or character, if you prefer the usual word. Write into your play a personage who scowls his way from the rise of the curtain to its final fall and who is compatibly unnatural — and a thousand typewriters will click to proclaim you a wonderful dramatist, where, as a matter of fact, you are nothing but a nature faker. There is no such personage. I except only hermits and the insane.

And this is why, in reviewing Rutherford from overseas before the American scrivening gentlemen became hysterical over its "ruthlessness," I made remark: "Its author's pen has skill — of that no doubt may exist; her eyes search aptly into the psychologic plexi of individuals as individuals, but they would seem to fail thus far to descry those plexi, those hearts, skid one against the other, save

in the most patent sense. We find her a reporter of the individual, of the *one*. Your real dramatist is the reporter of the two — or three; of the meeting place rather than the Morris chair."

The acute dramatist, a dramatist of the mark of Shaw in *Man and Superman*, of Brieux in *The Three Daughters*, of Mirbeau in *Business is Business*, appreciates vividly that even the most relentless-natured of human beings, in contact with other human beings, never remains consistent to the end of the chapter. He may remain consistent to his standards in thought and word, while refuting them with his actions — or vice versa. But wholly, entirely, finally consistent — never! You sing Ibsen, Strindberg and a blood brother or two into my ear? But the "relentless" dramatic personages of Ibsen and Strindberg are intermittently less individuals than groupings individualized. They are — blame the word — symbols; they are summaries; they are creeds, abstract and concrete, assembled under a man's or a woman's hat. Very plainly, any person proficient in humorous details and small dissensions may readily turn this argument into a fool's cap and stick it atop my head (such a person might argue, for instance, that such a character as John Rutherford might, too, be a summary in one body of several living characters — an argument, which, being baseless, would unquestionably be regarded very seriously by the academically inclined); but, while I freely grant that the argument

has its imposing flaws, I must also freely admit that it contains a certain basic tonic quality that is antidotal to much of the nonsense that is peddled on the question in general.

The theatrical manager or other person who talks "cycles" does so because he is in the custom of regarding the various types of plays not from the genuine viewpoint of thematic action, but from the traditional viewpoint of vocabulary, stage business, costumes and scenery. For example, in the metaphysics of the cycle babblers, a society play is a play in which the characters wear evening dress, lounge luxuriously on the gilt furniture, deport themselves with epigrammatic suavity and ring intermittently for Jenkins. For illustration, a military play is a play in which all the men wear uniforms, in which a horse is heard periodically to gallop outside the house, and in which the current war seems to have been brought about through the circumstance that two men happen to be deadly rivals for the hand of the same girl. For instance, a romantic play is any play the scenes of which are laid in a period previous to 1870, in which complementally the costumes are not modern, in which one of the men characters, glimpsing the leading lady, exclaims: "By m' faith, she is a likely wench!" and in which every character except the leading lady carries a horse pistol or a sword — the leading lady carrying a guitar. To be sure, there is another species of romantic play that the managers recognize. This second species

is exactly like the first, except that all the characters are kings, queens, princesses, dukes, royal chamberlains, prime ministers and handsome lieutenants in the armies of the neighboring kingdoms.

Others before me have splintered lances in tilt with the cycle hallucination, but it flashes at me that they have missed the salient point of the contention. It is all very spectacular and coördinately ingénu to say that the public is always ready for a good play no matter how many plays like it have immediately preceded it; it is all very well and very easy to marshal statistics to prove that in some certain apparent "cycle" of farce, let us assume, a good melodrama, a good satirical play, a good comedy or a good anything else has been preëminently successful with the public. But it seems to me that the real feature here is this: What are believed by some to be cycles of public taste for certain different forms of theatrical entertainment are really nothing but cycles of lack of taste (or discernment) on the part of the theatrical producers.

The managers' minds move in cycles and, having no alternative, the public's taste must follow suit. Whatever intrinsically the public may want, the public, patently enough, cannot get it until the manager gives it to the public. In time, through some accident or other, the manager happens against his intuition to produce the sort of play for which the public has had a hankering for a number of years, and then the manager and other obtuse souls forth-

with announce triumphantly that the wheel of public taste has turned round again. Immediately, the manager figures out his *coup* in terms of externals. If the successful play contains a novel and vivid theme laid in Egypt, the manager forgets that the theme is almost wholly responsible for the good fortune with which his production has met and deduces the idea that a cycle of Egyptian drama (which to him means pyramids, the Sphinx by moonlight, palm trees and maybe a sandstorm) is upon the world. The subsequent substantial financial success of similarly scened, very bad plays disgorged by other producers, contrary to all that has been written on the subject, has nothing whatever to do with a "cycle." Had the first Egyptian drama and its numerous patterns been produced five years previous, the same "cycle" story would have extruded itself at that time. But, exclaim you — recalling what I said at the beginning of these reviews — public taste figures in the matter all the same! Certainly. But that taste does not move in cycles. It is always equally bad.

NO. 7

IT is the commonly accepted superstition of our theatrical audiences that any woman who has broken the seventh commandment is — as a matter of pure course — naturally a breaker of all the others. As a result of this peculiarly heathen attitude, in all of our native-made plays save such wherein the woman's misdemeanor is given palliation on the ground that "I was nothing but a child — I knew nothing of the world," an interesting harlot is held in less esteem than a virtuous bore. Just why this condition of affairs should obtain in the theatre I am at a loss to understand, inasmuch as we all know perfectly well, of course, that outside the theatre things are quite otherwise. However, I suppose the circumstance may be explained away by the fact that our average man's confused notion of a harlot is a woman who:

1. In France, sleeps in a Louis Quinze bed, falls in love with a young nobleman and eventually dies of consumption.
2. In England, marries a respectable man, brings about his social ostracism and eventually commits suicide.
3. In America, wears a red satin décolleté dress, frequently remarks "How about a little drink, boys?," is an omnivorous smoker of cigarettes, crosses her legs when she sits down, and eventually reforms.

It has remained for a woman, Anne Crawford Flexner, to correct, in so far as is possible under the circumstances, this widespread error into which the local theatrical peasantry has fallen. And although, true enough, the lady playwright compromises by conventionally "reforming" her personage at the end of her play (it were too much to hope that everything might be accomplished at once), it yet obtrudes that in the character of Mrs. Oliver, in the play *The Marriage Game*, Miss Flexner has given the better-grade Sister Seven at least a portion of her just due.

Had Miss Flexner presented her argument in the form of serious drama instead of comedy, her play, of course, would very probably have brought about its ears the immediate gruntings of the professional Ivanhoses of the community's morals, it being the native mind to object to all truth in the drama unless the aforesaid truth be presented in the comic spirit. This accounts for the occurrence that so many of our so-called serious plays deal in themes which have no foundation in fact. What Miss Flexner has done is to take a platitude — which is to say, something new to the minds of the regular metropolitan theatre patrons — garnish it with a very wholesome and genuine wit and then, in spite of the latter, insinuate the result into the heads of the herd through the wise device of casting the central figure, the harlot, in the person of an actress so good-looking and so wholly entrancing in herself that the herd is

wooded into acquiescence — not mentally of course (which would be impossible), but physically.

I have ever contended that, no matter what the moral nature of the rôle or playwright's designation of heroine or villainess or what not, the real heroine, the actually sympathetic and convincing female personage in an acted play, is generally that actress who, be she what she may in the dramatic demands of the play, is the best-looking member of the cast. Send me a seat from which to review such a bi-moral female-rôled play as *The Kreutzer Sonata* or *The New Magdalen* or, say, a production of *Othello* and cast some proficient old battleax for Desdemona and some infinitely less talented but young and very lovely hussy for Emilia, and I promise you a critique that would lose almost any newspaper critic his job ten minutes after it appeared in print! And after my critique has been read and set down as nonsense by aged authorities on the drama, I shall be prepared to have you select the most scholarly critics from among their number and pit them in argumentation against me in the public square; and I will guarantee you to criticise their heads off.

LESSONS FOR PLAYWRIGHTS

I

HOW TO MAKE AN AUDIENCE FEEL A THRILL

1. Cause a character to lay a revolver on a table or place a revolver in his pocket, never to refer to it or use it again. In other words, a dramatically unjustified display of a revolver for the specific mechanical purpose of thrilling the spectatorial spine by placing it in a state of suspense.
2. Darken the stage when a light stage would be perfectly logical so far as the immediate demands of the play are concerned.
3. A vivid flash of lightning and sudden, loud thunder-clap.
4. Cause one character who desires not to be seen to remain on the stage when the footsteps of some one coming are heard approaching nearer and nearer, the character delaying his exit until the last possible moment.
5. Throw the shadow of a character against the wall of a room by causing the character to carry a lantern or candle in a darkened room.
6. Smash something. Say an article of furniture. Better still, a pane of glass. Better still, batter in a door.

7. A woman's shriek or scream.

8. A character goes into a room off stage, closing the door behind him. Another character enters looking for the first character, approaches the door, tries it and finds it locked. He turns toward the audience with a puzzled, worried expression. The audience will be thrilled. It matters not if the character who is in the room is merely taking a bath or a nap, the audience will respond to the mechanical trick of the locked door. The audience will immediately suspect suicide, murder or something sinister, however slight may be all reasons for suspecting anything of the sort.

9. Cause a chain lock to rattle heavily when the door of a darkened "den" or room is opened and to fall clanging back into place when the door is closed.

10. Predict through one of the characters that something thrilling may happen presently even where there is no intention to have it happen.

11. The faithful old revolver shot.

12. Place a loud-ticking clock on the premises to heighten the nervous tension of a quiet dramatic scene.

II

HOW TO MAKE AN AUDIENCE LAUGH

1. Cause a man to give another man a resounding whack on the back under the guise of friendship. The laugh in this instance may be "built up" stead-

ily in a climacteric way by repeating the blow three times at intervals of several minutes.

2. A man gives a woman a whack on the back, believing in an absent-minded moment that the woman (to whom he is talking) is a man.

3. One character steps on the sore foot of another character, causing the latter to jump with pain.

4. The spectacle of a man laden with many large bundles.

5. A man or a woman starts to lean his or her elbow on a table or arm of a chair, the elbow slipping off abruptly and suddenly precipitating him or her forward.

6. One character imitating the walk of another character who is walking in front of him and cannot see him.

7. A man consuming a drink of considerable size at one gulp.

8. A character who, on entering an "interior" or room scene, stumbles over a rug. If the character in point be of the "dignified" sort, the power of this laugh-provoker is doubled.

9. Intoxication in almost any form.

10. Two men in heated conversation. One starts to leave. Suddenly, as if fearing the other will kick him while his back is turned, this man bends his body inward (as if he actually had been kicked) and sidles off.

11. A man who, in trying to light a cigar or cig-

arette, strikes match after match in an attempt to keep one lighted. If the man throws each useless match vigorously to the floor with a muttered note of vexation the laughter will increase as the stragem is prolonged.

12. The use of a "hell" or "damn."

13. A man proclaims his defiance of his wife while the latter is presumably out of hearing. As the man is speaking, his wife's voice is heard calling him. Meekly he turns and goes to her.

14. A pair of lovers. They try several times to kiss, and each time are interrupted by the entrance of some one or by the ringing of the door-bell or telephone-bell or something of the sort.

15. A bashful man and a not-bashful woman are seated on a bench or divan. As the woman gradually edges up to the man, the man just as gradually edges away from her.

16. A character gets his hand stuck in a decanter.

17. A character throws an imaginary object into the wings, whereupon a bell rings.

III

HOW TO MAKE AN AUDIENCE CRY

1. A child in a nightie saying his "Now I Lay Me." If the prayer is concluded with "and please, dear Dod, send my papa back to me," when it is a divorce play, or a military play with father at the

front, or something of the sort — or with “mamma” substituted for “papa” if the play be of the “problem” species,—this episode will always exercise a doubly profound effect on the audience’s heart.

2. A scene in which the heroine drops a rose from her corsage after a disagreement with the hero and in which the hero subsequently picks up the rose, presses it to his lips, and stands with the flower in his hand looking in the direction whither the heroine has made her exit.

3. A man or a woman — or a man and a woman — seated in front of a grate-fire in a darkened room while some one (preferably a girl) is playing the piano softly in the adjoining room.

4. The playing of an organ either on or off stage in a rural, religious, or any other kind of play.

5. A scene showing a couple of comrades dying of thirst on a desert.

6. A scene in which a wayward mother or father comes back and speaks to her or his child without the latter’s knowing its parent and with the departure of the parent without a disclosure to the child of the parent’s identity.

7. A little child dying on the stage.

8. A blind girl.

9. An old and decrepit soldier indulging in reminiscences of his valorous fighting days.

10. A tender reference to a picture of mother, either hanging on the wall or contained in a locket.

11. A scene in which a stepmother treats her step-daughter cruelly.

12. Church chimes on Christmas Eve.

13. A poor family, with the little son telling his father all the things he has written Santa Claus to be sure to bring him.

14. A silent moment on a dimly lighted stage, two lovers who have had a misunderstanding being the persons involved in the scene.

15. Any love-scene played in the moonlight.

16. The whistle of a railroad locomotive or a river-boat far away in the distance.

17. In a play laid in the South, the sound of darkies singing in the distance.

18. A log-fire in the open at night, or a bridge at night. The latter is particularly effective.

19. A wife or sister or sweetheart, as the case may be, falls to sleep on a divan toward the end of the play; the hero steals quietly to the back of the couch, leans over it, brushes back the woman's hair and kisses her tenderly on the forehead; then puts out the light and tiptoes from the room, turning at the door (through which a light streams) to cast one last loving glance at the sleeper.

20. An old and faithful darky servant who remains loyal to his master through all the latter's trials and tribulations. In a military play, the audience's tears may always be won with a scene in which the old darky begs to have one final word, one last

good-by, with his master before the latter is led off to prison or to be shot.

21. Any scene in which a man forgives an erring woman or in which, when finally won to forgiveness, he goes to her and suddenly clasps her in his arms without saying a word.

22. The scene wherein a lost child is returned to its mother — accompanied by the latter's cry of "My Baby!"

23. An errant woman at bay crying out, "I am not a bad woman!"

24. A character laboring under great sorrow with a smile on his face.

25. A telegram. The heroine opens it, reads it, clutches it in her hand with a moan and sinks into a chair.

26. The singing, playing or mentioning of Home, Sweet Home.

27. A scene showing a father objecting to his boy's love for a certain woman (preferably an adventuress), and with the boy wildly, tearfully imploring his father to relent.

28. A scene in which the leading character, alone, deserted, and heart-sore in his desolate room at night, sadly wonders "what they're doing at home now."

29. A scapegrace son who, finally repenting but fearful of facing his parents, pours out his woes to his steadfast sweetheart and concludes with "but I

don't see why I should annoy you with my troubles." The girl then goes up to him and grasping him firmly by the hand indicates that he has in her a constant friend.

30. A final curtain-scene in which, when the hero is compelled to leave for some far-off land or serve a sentence in prison or something of the sort, the heroine says to him, "I'll be waiting for you when you return."

ON THE HARLOT

IT is one of the peculiarities of the serious theatre that it regards the harlot as one of two hard and fast institutions. Either she is an institution for the complete spiritual and physical annihilation of man or she is an institution for his complete spiritual and physical redemption and uplift. The drama, it would appear, recognizes no middle ground. It is able to conceive of no less positive effect one way or the other. It must be the bass drum or the zither, the mud puddle or the swan pond, pigs' knuckles or terrapin. One rather comes to the conclusion that in the more temperate and dispassionate approach of the problem in the farce comedies which have handled the subject is to be found the best proof that our farce comedies are often our best serious plays. And the other way round. Compare, for example, the profundity of much of Brieux's farcical *Les Hanneçons* with the comicality of much of D'Annunzio's dramatic *Gioconda*. Compare the thoughtfulness of flippant *Anatol* with the frippery of *Sutro's Two Virtues*. Hubert Henry Davies, being an Englishman, views the harlot as an uplifter. To him the nude ascending the staircase is a mixture of Billy Sunday and hair tonic. In his latest play, *Outcast*, we are betutored with the

picture of one of the ladies negotiating the usual redemption business. But Davies can write a bad play with such distinction that he becomes a pleasant theatrical evening. No theatrical Briton of the day, excepting only Galsworthy and Barrie, is quite so facile as he in the trick of adroit and nicely varnished dialogue. What is more, he is a writer of detached scenes of a quality far above the quality of his plays as a whole. In another direction of dramatic form this is true, too, of the American, Mr. Sheldon. Let the latter build a play in its entirety of such sterling material as the organ-grinder scene in *Romance*, the priest scene in *The Boss*, or the private supper-room scene in *The Song of Songs*, and he will strike a notable date into the calendar of dawning American drama. Let Davies write a whole play of the sort of material indicated by two or three scenes between the woman of Piccadilly and Geoffrey in *Outcast*, and he will deserve at least a portion of the encomiums which my colleagues have already bestowed upon him.

THE EYE AND MR. ZIEGFELD

THE large numismatical success of Florenz Ziegfeld in the field of the music show is in marked degree due to the circumstance that he divides his primary appeal not between the ears and eyes, as do the majority of his compatriots, but between the eyes alone. He appreciates that the American eye is ever mightier than the American ear. He appreciates that a Gilbert lyric is as nothing against a shapely torso. He appreciates that a Lehar roulade is as nothing against a bonny face.

He realizes, does Ziegfeld, that in the theatre or out of the theatre, it is always, or almost always, the eye — rarely the ear — that casts the ballot. It is not, for instance, what Roosevelt says that wins him the mob sympathy; it is what Roosevelt looks. It is not, for example, what Jack London writes that causes him to be remarked as a “manly” and a “red-blooded” author; it is that photograph with the soft collar. He realizes, does Ziegfeld, that what lifted Bryan out of his pristine obscurity was not what Bryan said, but the Prince Albert and black string tie that Bryan wore. That what made a fortune for Dr. Munyon was not his advertisements or his remedies, but the circumstance that Munyon looked like the public’s idea of a doctor. (Would

this Munyon have made so much had he looked like, say, Eddie Foy?) He realizes, does Ziegfeld, that Augustus Thomas is hailed by the public as the dean of American playwrights, not because he actually is the dean of American playwrights, but because he looks a great deal more like what the dean of American playwrights should look than, for instance, Edward Sheldon or Otto Hauerbach. He appreciates that the public buys a magazine not for what good literature may be in it, but for the fancy picture on its cover; that the public is pro-English and anti-German because tall, straight Kitchener looks a whole lot handsomer in his uniform than short, dumpy von Hindenburg does in his; and that the public knows Annette Kellerman is a great diver because it has had a look at her in a one-piece bathing suit. And, realizing and appreciating this, Mr. Ziegfeld has been sufficiently astute to capitalize the public emotion.

What the result? The eye, attending one of the Follies productions, is so blandished and enticed by a sagaciously picked quorum of girls that it forgets completely that an ear is its neighbor. Indeed, is reminded of the propinquity and existence of an ear only when an eye in the next seat exclaims, "Say, Adolph, lamp the á la Maryland on the left end!"

According to the professors,¹ we possess 32,820

¹ E. Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of Sensations*, 1897. *Zeitschrift f. Psychol. u. Physiol. d. Sinnesorgane*, 1896-7 (Müller). *Sensations of Tone* (1895) pp. 145 ff. *Physiol. d. Gehörs*, ch. ii.

qualities of visual sensation, qualities all equally elemental as sensations however diverse the physical stimuli with which they are connected. As opposed to these figures, we are able to discriminate but some 550 qualities of simple noise. Thus, albeit somewhat obliquely, do we glimpse the vastly greater fertility and importance of the eye over the ear as an organ for music show appeal. The capacity of the eye is, approximately, six times as great as that of the ear — for pleasure or for pain. The latter problem is the producer's. And, truth to tell, it is not so difficult a problem as one might lead himself to imagine. It is patently less troublesome to gratify the eye than the ear. A music lover may tear his hair in agony at the spectacle of a fat soprano invading Richard Strauss where he may rest soothed and calm before the spectacle of a Lillian Lorraine bombarding Irving Berlin.

Ziegfeld agrees with Jules Lemaître that when one knows how to look at a ballet, one forgets to listen to the orchestra; one mind would not be sufficient at one time for two orders of sensations so subtle and so strong. He agrees with Lemaître that legs and tights are elements of expression which should not be disdained. He agrees, in short, with Hilaire André Beauchois Verdlét Gaston de Reven-court that "when one goes to a theatre to see a musical play, one goes to *see* a musical play — not to hear one."

SOME CASUAL NOTES

THE critic who complains that it has been a bad theatrical season is equally a bad critic. There is no such thing as a bad theatrical season. There is, true, such a thing as a bad managerial season and there is, indeed, such a thing as a bad theatregoing season, but, patently, these are not one with such a thing as a bad theatrical season. If a haberdasher opens up a kiosk and displays for sale therein nothing but mauve gabardine neckties with elephant's-breath polka-dots and at the end of the year announces emphatically that it has been a bad season for neckties, the laugh is on the haberdasher. And quite possibly on the few misguided souls who have gone in for the haberdasher's especial species of neck boa. But certainly not on the season.

It is the same with the theatre. The fact is, that the worse a theatrical season has been from the bulked standpoint of producer and public, the better that season has been from the standpoint of the separative critic. Nothing vouches so strongly for the prudent and reflective critic's ability as an unsuccessful dramatic semester. Such an era attests to the verity of the arguments such a critic has set forth. It offers, in his behalf, incontrovertible proofs that he has been right and that the producers

and their suite have been wrong. It eloquently and brilliantly transforms the critic's "flippant sarcasm" into what is suddenly beheld to be surprising sense. And it demonstrates with not a little engine-power the accuracy of the theory that, after all, the umpire may know almost as much about baseball as the player who has just struck out.

*

If we were to judge the relations of men and women and the bearing of such relations upon the processes of life from the American adaptations of French plays, we would have to believe that babies were the result of kissing.

*

Stars may be divided into two classes: those who are loved by the public and those who are loved by the manager.

*

Drama — the erroneous theory that the most important episodes in a man's or a woman's life are the most interesting.

*

The arbitrary heroes of the American box-office drama: Jews, husbands, men who never went to college, Western mining engineers, men accused of murder, crooks, Irishmen (if they can sing), army lieutenants and bad painters. The arbitrary heroines: governesses who have been seduced by the son

of the family, orphans, single women, married women, grandmothers and mothers.

*

In essaying to imitate Shaw, most playwrights are completely successful in imitating Shaw's garrulity, though considerably less so in imitating the substance of Shaw's garrulity.

*

The Gerry Society — an organization which, by preventing children predisposed to become actors from following their inclination, hopes thereby in time to preserve the drama.

*

Programme — a subtle device employed by theatrical managers to persuade an audience to believe that the play it is about to see is going to be acted.

*

The test of all theatrical dramatic art is clothes. If you see a play in the playhouse and somehow believe it to be an authentic specimen of theatrical dramatic art but are not quite sure, shut your eyes and picture the actors and actresses impersonating the characters (which is to say, the characters), stark naked. If, after this the play remains convincing, it is, in every sense, a good play.

*

All that is necessary to make the ancient triangle drama impressive to the natives is to inject into it

lofty nomenclature (such, for example, as la Comtesse Marina de Dasetta and le Marquis de Sardeloup), scenes laid in well buttled, tapestry-draped drawing-rooms, and allusions to St. Marceaux (vintage of '97) and the Ritz Hotel.

*

It is deplored by some critics that George M. Cohan adheres in his plays to the vulgar atmosphere of Broadway. And yet these are the same critics who most emphatically endorse some British Cohan for sticking to the equally brash, equally local, equally in itself sordid, commonplace and vulgar Manchester.

*

Theatrical manager: artist: : artist's model: artist.¹

*

Farce, as we get it in our theatres, is based largely on the theory that it is awfully funny to be caught in another man's wife's bedroom.

*

Speculator — one who sells a two-dollar theatre ticket for fifty cents above the regulation price, thus robbing the purchaser of two dollars and fifty cents.

*

Dramatic critic — one who is less concerned in reviewing the impression a play makes upon him

¹ Ninety years old.

than in reviewing the impression *he* makes on the play.

*

It would appear to be the current notion of our newspaper proprietors that the theatre (and hence the advertising columns) will be financially benefited through compelling the newspaper reviewers to discharge themselves of a copious praise, and nothing but praise, upon the event of each and every new theatrical production. And yet, who have made the most money: the theatrical figures whom the newspaper critics have habitually vaselined or those whom these same critics have spoofed? George M. Cohan made over half a million dollars in the full face of the low guying that was visited upon him by the newspaper boys in the days when he shouted slang loudest and waved a flag most wildly. George Tyler, anointed regularly by the newspaper boys with sauce Melba, not long ago was adjudged a bankrupt. Harry Von Tilzer last year backed a play which was vigorously — and truthfully — denounced by the gazetteers as rubbish, and Harry Von Tilzer's right pants' pocket now bulges with bills. Who has the bigger bank account, Mrs. Fiske (who is consistently smeared with caramel juice by the critical boys), or Billie Burke (who more often has come in, and properly, for the critical wallop)? A. H. Woods made a fortune out of *The Girl from Rector's*, which the greelys tried to laugh out of court, and lost a fortune on *Gypsy Love*,

which they treated most magnanimously — which, indeed, they went so far as to hail as a fine example of operetta art when it was nothing of the sort — and they knew it. The newspaper proprietors, in brief, are killing the box-office with kindness. They are killing the golden egg that laid the goose.

*

Theatrically speaking, an Englishman is a subject of King George; an American, a predicate.

*

Psychology — a word used by kind-hearted critics in an attempt to render clear the unintelligible portions of bad plays produced by good friends.

*

In the theatre, a hero is one who believes that all women are ladies. A villain one who believes that all ladies are women.

*

One reason why the galleries of our theatres (as the theatrical managers lament) are no longer filled, as they were fifteen years ago, with newsboys is that all the newsboys are now theatrical managers.

*

Fifteen or twenty years ago, pictures of actors and actresses were given away with packages of cigarettes and smoking tobacco. To-day, they are given away with packages of chocolate bonbons. Just what this proves is not altogether clear to me.

But somewhere in it I detect a suspicion of something which seems to hint rather subtly at the emasculation and effeminizing of the American theatre.

*

If, as many of our so-called constructive critics maintain, it is true that our realistic American drama is largely successful in holding the mirror up to nature, it must follow as a logical corollary that all the important events in our national life occur in the libraries of private houses and that, whatever their nature, they are always attended by love interest, comic relief and a display of the latest styles in women's gowns.

*

According to the American theatre, it is customary in real life for two persons, when speaking to each other, always to stand side by side and direct their remarks to the front wall of the room. According to the American theatre, it is also customary in real life for two or more persons, when engaged in a normal conversation, however brief, never to remain seated in their chairs but at periodic intervals to rise, cross the room, walk around the piano, linger at the mantel, cross back and then reseat themselves.

*

Advanced vaudeville — the theory that dill pickles, whiskers, big stomachs, pancake derbies and William Jennings Bryan are funnier than dill pickles,

whiskers, big stomachs, pancake derbies and Cassie Chadwick.

*

It would seem to be a tradition of our theatre that either amateurs or Arnold Daly must finally be entrusted with introducing to the American public all the really worthwhile dramatists.

*

Nine vaudeville acts out of every ten are based upon the theory that an average human being's capacity for acute suffering is limited to about twenty minutes. The tenth act, on the other hand, is based upon the theory that average human beings do not attend vaudeville shows, and that, as a consequence, vaudeville audiences are abnormal, and hence able to endure exquisite pain for at least half an hour. The tenth act is, therefore, known in vaudeville circles as a headliner.

*

For such persons as care no longer for Shakespeare in the theatre, there is, in the main, usually no safer refuge than a modern Shakespearean theatrical production.

*

The task of the musical comedy composer is a difficult one. He has to write music that will make an audience forget the librettist's lines. The task of the librettist is not less difficult. He has to write lines that will make an audience forget the compos-

er's music. Both usually fail. And where they do not fail, the producer generally picks out an awful looking chorus.

*

The American theatre and the American drama depend largely upon the following being accepted as inviolable truths: (1) that all persons placed on trial before the law, particularly persons accused of murder, are innocent — and that juries are intelligent; (2) that the accumulation of great wealth inevitably brings with it unhappiness; (3) that melodramatic events occur only in the night-time; (4) that our "wives, sisters and sweethearts" care only for stupid plays; and (5) that only comic characters drink beer.

*

Dramatic technique — the art of saying nothing skillfully.

*

Suspense — the highly nervous sensation which a playwright imparts to his audience when, in the last act of the play, the villain seems momentarily about to escape ultimate punishment at the hero's hands, thus threatening to keep the audience inside the theatre for another act.

*

The hero in a play is that character who acts as we would like to act if we were placed in the same situation. The villain of the play is that character

who acts as we would actually act if we were placed in the same situation. . . . Obviously, this definition does not hold true if the heroine isn't good-looking.

*

Symbolism — the subterfuge of spelling "non-sense" with a capital N.

*

Spotlight — A theatrical device for assisting audiences to spot bad actors.

*

The much ridiculed soliloquy is often a perfectly natural thing. The ridiculing of it is largely the ridicule of tradition. As go most of the plays we see on Broadway, a soliloquy at that is *ipso facto* just half as bad as a dialogue.

*

Burlesque, of the species made popular by such noted impresarios as Sam T. Jack, Al Reeves, Ben Welch and Barney Gerard, owes its popularity and financial success to the theory, accepted by many, that Moulin Rouge pronounced Mulligan's Rug is even more sidesplitting than a fat lady in tights. The basic difference between the form of entertainment classified above under the name of burlesque and two-dollar musical comedy is that all characters representing Frenchmen are in the former called Monsieur Camembert and in the latter Monsieur

Roquefort. Otherwise the retort, "That ain't a name; that's a cheese" is common to both species.

*

A first-nighter is one who believes that Frank Reicher would be a better actor if he were not such a homely man and that the moon always casts a purple light.

*

Which, in the American theatre, is the better known, the more applauded, the more widely and favorably remarked upon: the acting talent of Arnold Daly or the bobbed hair of Mrs. Castle? — the producing aptitude of Winthrop Ames or Valeska Suratt's mole?

*

Adaptation — the theory that it is perfectly safe for a good-looking young married woman to go to a man's bachelor apartment.

*

The local "drama of ideas" of which we read in the newspapers, seems by and large to be grounded on such irrevocable principles as (1) the idea that the mere thought of one's mother is sufficiently puissant to make one see the error of one's ways and repent; (2) the idea that whenever a villain succeeds in getting hold of a hero's revolver and, subsequently, after taunting the hero, essays to shoot him, the villain is always frustrated through the circum-

stance that the hero has exercised the precaution either to remove the cartridges or load the gun with blanks; and (3) the idea that the back wall of a tenement room always has some of the plaster missing in the upper left-hand corner.

*

Amateur Night — Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday at most Broadway theatres.

*

The villain in an American play is that character in the play who, were he a real living man, would in all probability decline to associate with the author.

*

A good actor is an actor who is able to interpret with complete naturalness the rôles which he plays. Now, obviously, to be completely natural is not to act. Thus proving to us that there can be no such thing as a good actor.

*

In foreign plays adapted for the American stage, a lady's bedroom may be described as a room in which the audience sleeps.

*

In view of the increasing prevalence of the lazy and detrimental custom of so many of our lady players to permit expensive toilettes to substitute for talent and hard work, I have a suggestion to offer

our more sincere and serious producers, a suggestion which — will they carry it out — cannot, I believe, fail in time to improve to a very considerable degree the quality of acting in the native theatre. My suggestion: make the ladies rehearse their rôles in the altogether.

*

Revue — A burlesque form of theatrical entertainment the success of which depends largely upon its ability to convince its audience that the most serious dramas of the season were perfectly ridiculous. One cannot, remember, burlesque successfully the Fifth Symphony, Rembrandt, Cæsar and Cleopatra, Schopenhauer's Essay on Women, the cheese pie at the Hofbräu, or anything else of sound intrinsic worth.

*

Dinner — A meal invented for the purpose of getting temporarily not needed characters off the stage.

*

Many persons make the mistake of believing a moderately good play can engross one's attention more certainly than a completely bad play. A mistake, quite obviously. I doubt if there be anything so enthralling for the moment as utter imbecility, boldly, beautifully unconscious of its imbecility. In token of this point of view, is not 10-20-30 melodrama actually more beguiling while in movement than certain plays artistically and intrinsically by

many leagues such melodrama's superior? Is not, actually, such a preposterous marriage of nonsenses as *The Whip* more hypnotic than a play of the moderately worthy aspect of, say, *Beauty and the Barge*? One hesitates to admit, but is it none the less true? I recall once having seen a performance of the musical comedy called *The Mocking Bird* (it was back in 1902 or 1903) with a number of the principal actors in the cast dead drunk, yet going through their vocal and lingual antics with a grim and stolid seriousness; and never, I may tell you, have I been held in so absolute a condition of fascination by a piece soberly performed. And who has not been caught firm in one's tracks by some imbecile street corner orator where the lecture of some moderately sane college professor or public office holder — on the same subject — has driven one frothing and hatless into the night?

*

Paris revues, all of them are (save in the quality of girl) always much the same. The only thing that ever changes in them is the chorus — and all that that changes is its clothes. In relation to this, it has always seemed to me that the script of the libretto of a Paris revue must look very much as follows:

8:45 P. M. Enter chorus in cloaks, hats, long gowns, lingerie, shoes and stockings.

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9:10 P. M. Enter chorus in hats, long gowns, lingerie, shoes and stockings.

9:40 P. M. Enter chorus in long gowns, lingerie, shoes and stockings.

10:05 P. M. Enter chorus in lingerie, shoes and stockings.

10:25 P. M. Enter chorus in lingerie.

10:45 P. M. Enter chorus.

*

In order to clear the stage of certain personages in the play as certain occasions arose, a playwright of small artistic status recently resorted to such simple dialogic devices as "Come, let us take a walk" and "I'll go and see how things are in the next room"—or something of the innocent sort. Naturally enough, those of our dramatic critics who believe that in actual life people never leave rooms save according to a strict technique, were loud in their protests. Here, one of the most ridiculous of the many purposeless practices of showy theatrical criticism as indulged in on our shore. Some time ago, when an illiterate was made the Belasco butt of a rapacious and scarcely more literate professional theatrical public for purposes of press agent work and to deflect attention from the main point of the argument in hand, much comical ado was made over the manner in which the poor soul had achieved the "exits" of his characters. As a matter of pure fact, several of these exits were in straight accordance with the actual, if homely, truths of everyday actions and were, as such, of twice the

virtue of such purely technical coups as Aubrey's artificial Pinero exit in the Drummle jabbering scene of the first act of *Tanqueray*, as Canon Bonsey's highly doubtful exit after the appearance of Felicia Hindemarsch in the conservatory in the first act of Henry Arthur Jones' *Mrs. Dane's Defense*, as the starving little Fritz's exit in the second act of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*—in short, as any one of many similar purely proscenium stratagems.

*

Mr. David Belasco makes money because, in the physical habilitation of dramatic manuscripts, he is shrewd enough to improve upon life and nature. We talk about Belasco "realism." Belasco is really realler than realism. Instead of holding the mirror up to nature, he holds nature up to the mirror. (Wilde said there are always some critics who quote this hackneyed passage about art holding the mirror up to nature, forgetting that the unfortunate aphorism is deliberately said by Hamlet in order to convince the bystanders of his absolute insanity in all art matters.) Belasco appreciates with Wilde that "what art really reveals and should reveal to us is nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition; that nature has good intentions but, as Aristotle once said, she cannot carry them out." The public admires Belasco because mere everyday realism, the realism of to-day, world realism, is not

his goal; because he appreciates that dramatic literature, scenic architecture and lighting always anticipate life and nature. "For what is nature? Nature is no great mother who has borne us. She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life. Things are because we see them, and what we see and how we see it depends on the arts that have influenced us."

Art flavored the snow of nature with vanilla and decorated it with chopped almonds and we had biscuit tortoni. Art took nature's crude orange, a fruit full of appendicitis, removed the danger and gave us the finished navel orange. Art, through the agency of Burbank, has given us flowers nature never even dreamed of being able to create by her own hand. Belasco, through the agency of art, has given us realism so realistically real that nature's realism seems artificial and puny in comparison. Belasco's warm purple Palm Beach moonglow in *Nobody's Widow*, his flowers in the garden of *Years of Discretion*, his California sun of *The Girl of the Golden West* — to name but a few of his achievements — surpass nature's efforts at their best. One may almost any time see a mere Shubert or a mere Klaw and Erlanger sunset or moonlit night free of charge by looking out of the window. That's why people go to the Belasco theatre.

It is the conventional American objection to a night at the Grand Guignol that many of the plays presented there are "too horrible." Says the *voyageur*: "A play in which a character is choked to death! Uhhh!" And, saying, he makes himself a face of large disrelish. Says the *voyageur*: "A play in which a character dies of cholera! Uhhh!" And, saying, he makes himself a nose of much-wrinkled aversion. A queer coccus, this *voyageur* of ours. A play in which a tiresome character is choked to death disgusts him; yet give him a play in which a tiresome character is *not* choked to death and he is enchanted, bewitched, and proceeds to vote it an amusing and uplifting spectacle. A play in which an objectionable character is made to die of cholera is to him a most odious and depressing play; but give him a play in which the same bore-some character is permitted to get well and continue a spewing of platitudes and he is a delighted and entertained man; and proceeds to vote it a pleasant and agreeable presentation. When will such misled souls learn that the actually "too horrible" plays are not the French plays of the Guignol brand in which the characters are murdered, poisoned or otherwise put to death, but the American plays of the Daddy Longlegs brand in which the characters are *not* murdered, poisoned or otherwise put to death.

I am scarcely one of the profound dolts who loudly debates for "living," "real," "flesh and blood" characters in the drama. I am quite aware of the fact that if a playwright has anything genuinely interesting, or even merely diverting, to say, he is at whole liberty to put that something into the mouths of the stock sawdust dolls of the stage, forasmuch as, proportionately few living, real flesh and blood persons ever having anything worth while to say, it follows that a careless employment of too "real" play characters by the dramatist must succeed in lending to his work a marked air of spuriousness and artificiality. Wilde realized this yesterday as Molnar, Shaw, *et al.* realize it to-day. On the other hand, when along come playmakers who have little more in their mouths than a tongue and some teeth and a couple of tonsils, it follows that, having nothing interesting to articulate, they needs must place that lack of something interesting in the mouths of "living" characters, characters taken out of life, if they would have their plays seem not spurious and not artificial, but real. Or at least partly suggestive of life.

*

Contrary to every word hitherto delivered on the subject, I protest that the only position from which to witness a play is a seat in the very first row. It is a favorite argument against my contention that such a seat, being too close to the stage, tends to a

rape of the spectator's imagination through giving him a too near look at the actors in their now obvious rouge and mascara, at the holes and grease spots in the scenery, at the perspiring, shirt-sleeved prompter in the wings, at the shaky canvas of "marble" castles. So far, so good. But which is the lesser of two evils — to sit in the first row and contend with these after all trivial, easily to be surmounted, barriers to romance and imagination, or to sit further back in the auditorium and attempt to cope imaginatively with the unraveling of delicate romances over an intervening sea of bald heads? And not only bald heads, but female heads of sticky hirsutal architecture, or glutinous curls and scraggy little tails of back hair, of nauseating, unmistakable, switches and "rats" and coils, the lot gauded up with Broadway rhinestones and dyed chicken feathers?

Picture yourself seated, say in the seventh or eleventh or fourteenth row, and attempting to immerse your imagination in the color of the stage with your eyes ceaselessly, relentlessly biffed by such a field of grim realities, gutting ugliness. Picture yourself coaxing your romantic imagination back one thousand and one years into the Kismet sultanship of Al Raschid and the beggar Hajj — across half a dozen rows of false hair accompanied by no hair at all! Picture yourself coaxing your romantic imagination into the barge of Rostand's *Princesse Lointaine* versus the spectacle of grisly human

deficiencies interposed against your vision. What chance has the imagination and romantic sense of the average theatregoer against so vivid, so immediate, so powerful an antidote? Were I a theatrical manager, I should bar from my orchestra chairs all men without hair on their heads and all women of the "for God's sake sing" variety. Such, would I pack off to sit in the balcony and from the balcony would I bring down all the colored people (did you ever see a negress with false hair? Indeed, no!), all the sailors of the United States Navy (did you ever see a bald sailor? Indeed, no!) and all other such fine specimens of healthy non-interferers with imagination and the romantic sense who are, under the existing order of things, subtly and ignorantly steered by the box-office to that inconspicuous altitude.

*

A "Japanese play," in the Anglo-Saxon theatre, is any play in which a consideration and study of Japanese customs, morals, attitudes, traditions, character, actions, philosophies and the like are omitted in favor of a backdrop showing the peak of Fujiyama, numerous references to cherry blossoms and goldfish, the frequent use of the word "honorable," and two beautiful black and gold screens at the right and left upper entrances. The authentic Japanese nature of the characters in these "Japanese plays" is suggested to the audience via the programme, which reassures us that the fe-

males are appropriately named Something San and the males Something Jiro or Something Yama, via intermittent passages of dialogue in which the Sans speak affectionately of the moon, and via the practice of the Jiros and Yamas of observing somewhat floridly that "The hour of food is at hand" in the stead of "Dinner is ready." In brief, one of these so-known "Japanese plays" is any particularly inferior and impossible play whose inferiority and impossible quality it is hoped to conceal through the liberal application of kimonos and the accepted Anglo-Saxon flowery conception of the manner in which the Japanese speak, a manner which the shrewd and canny Japanese actually affect only when they engage themselves as butlers and valets to susceptible Anglo-Saxons. Thus it has come about that the white theatregoing public's idea of the Japanese is of a race whose lovely daughters are regularly (and with great pathos) seduced and deserted by handsome young American naval lieutenants, whose males run about dressed up like the Liberty Belles and whose women in general spend the day long either hopping around fluttering fans held horizontally at their chins or taking flowers from baskets and arranging them in vases.

*

Among those who vehemently contradict the legitimacy of the soliloquy's use in the drama may be found all those who believe that a woman, merely

because no one happens to be around, stops talking.

*

"To criticize a dramatic work," said Paul Bourget, "one must ask in the first place for what sort of public it was composed." Which may explain why there is no such thing as dramatic criticism in the United States.

*

Whom the gods would destroy, they first make playwrights.

*

"He who can, does; he who can't, criticizes." As, for respective example, George V. Hobart and William Hazlitt.

*

Character actor — one who is expert in preventing his false mustache from coming off.

*

Amateur actor — one who, through lack of experience, is less skilled in giving bad performances than a professional.

*

Moving pictures — the place where bad plays go when they die.

*

Brieux — a Krupp gun firing spit-balls.

*

At last I have figured out why it is that the character of an orphan girl — such, for example, as that of Judy Abbott in *Daddy Longlegs* — remains always one of the public's dramatic favorites. An orphan, obviously, has no parents. This, equally plainly, reduces the number of bad actors in the average cast by two.

*

I made bold, of a recent evening, to loan my person to an audience before a burlesque show at the Columbia Theatre, by name *Follies of the Day*. Though I do not presume to be a critic of the institution, it would yet seem to me, from sporadic attendance, that all burlesque is based upon the theory that the funniest things in the world, in the order named, are: (1) a firm of lawyers named Ketcham and Cheatem; (2) a German comedian named August Furst; (3) any and all references to cheese; (4) a large, bearded, fierce-looking desperado who, when finally he opens his mouth, speaks in a high falsetto; (5) slapping a fat lady in tights upon that portion of her anatomy which corresponds in location on the map of Europe to Roumania; (6) barking like a dog when sausage is mentioned; (7) a Salvation Army captain proclaiming "We save girls" with the ejaculation on the part of the comedian "Save me a brunette for Tuesday night"; (8) the vision of a bandanna hanging out of the coat-tails of a so-called "rube" character; and (9) a "travesty" on *Three Weeks*.

Consider how different is the higher form of entertainment known as musical comedy! Generally speaking, musical comedy is based upon the theory that the funniest things in the world, in the order named, are: (1) a firm of lawyers named Steele and Skinner; (2) a German comedian named Ludwig Dinkelspiel; (3) any and all references to an onion; (4) a large . . .

*

To me, the old and still popular notion that the theme of a play is none of the critic's business, that it is his business primarily to concern himself with the play as it stands whether the theme be to his mental digestion or not, is entirely silly. Would that I were such an one that I could treat dispassionately and with cool, unbiased, critical eye each and every thesis employed by each and every dramatic writer, regardless of my own prejudices for or against the theses; but, alas, nature has created me otherwise. For example, were a playwright to produce an absolutely faultless specimen of dramatic writing concerning itself with proving that prohibition is a fine thing or that a husband has a perfect right to shoot the man with whom his wife has dallied, I should probably denounce the work as something worse than drivel. On the other hand, let a playwright turn out a much less able piece of dramatic writing proving that intoxication is a thoroughly excellent thing for mankind or that, in the second case, it is the hus-

band who ought to be shot, and you will find me aligned with the counsel for the defense.

*

The trouble with men who set out to write a political play that shall say something is that they give their leading political character a daughter or a wife and subsequently extract their political drama from the operations of the female upon the male political personage. Quite patently, what results is nothing more than a very old-fashioned parlor drama, which the author fondly imagines to be a vigorous political play because he has called one character a District Attorney and another a Boss and has distributed a number of pungent passages anent "graft" and "the system" amongst the dialogue.

*

One of the most diverting circumstances connected with musical comedies whose scenes are laid in Parisian restaurants and dance halls rests in the opportunity provided the spectator to study the various stage producers' ideas as to what constitutes revelry. Of course there must always be revelry! No scene laid in Paris would be complete without it. All the girls in Paris always wear pink silk stockings and keep the toes of their right feet at five minutes after six. And the men spent all of their time beseeching Phileep to make haste with the "wine" and assuring Angèle that they are not married. The "rev-

elry " that the leading characters in the pieces keep referring to in speech and song at intervals of ten minutes is usually expressed by the lesser characters and chorus in three ways: first, by dashing madly across the stage from L. U. E. into an exit at R 1; second, by laughing periodically in loud and sudden outbursts in the wings; and third, by holding the skirts during the intermittent stroll across the scene about six or seven inches above the Mason and Dixon line established by the drawing-room.

*

About every year or so some otherwise respectable fellow conceives the idea that there is a "great big moving human drama" in the theme of the spiritual-minded young clergyman who views the outside world as a vast and lustful charnel house; who, falling under the charms of a worldly opera singer or actress, is led by her out into "life" and who, after mental alarums and physical excursions, is brought to one of five startling conclusions, to-wit:

1. That "the good in human beings over-shadows the bad, after all."
2. That "the spirit is weaker than the flesh."
3. That "conscience and vows are as nothing in the face of an overpowering love."
4. That "go where you will, be what you will, do what you will, but Glory come back to me."
5. That "you have opened my eyes and made me under-

stand, dear woman; I shall hear you singing in my heart forever."

*

Dramatic criticism — the theory that there is anything you can tell a theatrical manager.¹

*

By manner of concealing the actual reason for the indefeasible wrestle with Shakespeare toward which our native mummers would seem by and large ultimately to itch, it is the custom of the forenamed mummers, once they have publicly laid to with the Bard, to distill interviews in which they make arch observation that "we are only doing Shakespeare because we are unable to obtain contemporaneous plays worth doing." The contrary truth, obviously, being that they are only doing Shakespeare because it is a tradition and a fact of our American theatre that to do Shakespeare, however badly, is thenceforth to be held in profound veneration over the less bumptious performer who has done something else, however well. Four out of five actors who do battle with Shakespeare do so, not because they admire Shakespeare or because, as they pretend, they are unable to obtain suitable modern plays, or because they are consumed with the artistic desire to do something fine for the sake of its fine doing, but because of an overwhelming surge of personal con-

¹ Or an actor.

ceit — to which they are willing even to sacrifice the hard-won savings of years, for Shakespeare they full well know is a losing stage feat in these times — a largely baseless conceit to tilt against the scrapbooks of the dinned-in Shakespearean actors of another day.

*

The headmost objection to the so-called Manchester school of drama lies in the circumstance that it reproduces life so precisely that it is correspondingly tedious. Curiously enough, when a dramatist seeks to transfer a cross-section of life to the stage he invariably selects an enormously dull aspect of life for his maneuver. Thus it comes about that our inappositely named dramatic "slices of life" always — or almost always — are boresome theatrical visitings with persons who would be equally boresome out of the theatre. It is an obsession on the part of the playmakers that "slices of life" exist only in the drab regions of the world and among drab personages. The argument that a capable dramatist can take such a region and such a set of characters and make them interesting is also a good argument; good, however, because it echoes exactly what I have here sought to imply: that, to make them interesting, he has had to rescue them from the monotonous level of actuality and thus prevent them from being humdrum. Life requires the touch of the imaginative artist, the imaginative philosopher, to make it theatrically palatable. The difficulty here

is that so many of the "imaginative artists" of the playmaking world, when they seek to lodge life entertainingly behind the footlights, touch it with an illogical and disassociated imagination. They invent electricity in a gashouse. Life as life goes is a very colorless affair — at two dollars a seat.

*

The best critics are the inconsistent critics. Show me a consistent critic, a critic who sets himself a critical creed and abides by that creed with never a sidestep, never a whispered doubt, and I will show you a critic who is generally wrong. The theatre and its drama are as inconsistent institutions as the surface of the earthly sphere reveals. Dramatic criticism, if definitively and regularly consistent, becomes, therefore, as proportionately unsound as a brief on nose troubles written twenty-five years ago.

*

A nation's point of culture is to be estimated — so far as the theatre is concerned — in proportion to the respect it does not hold for melodrama. The American people love, honor and obey melodrama above every other form of dramatic art.

When I employ the phrase "American people," I direct reference not alone to the esthetically gelded mob made up of what is (redundantly) called the "average" American — that smutty but harmless bird who gets his musical education off a phonograph or pianola, his knowledge of art from the

tooth-paste calendars, his dramatic thrills from Owen Davis and his critical theories from the billboard quotations. But I include as well that other and probably more promiscuous — and infinitely more dangerous — cuckoo, the American who rates himself above the average and who, in passionate endeavor to justify the bill of lading, devotes himself assiduously to Robert Mantell in Shakespeare, Brander Matthews's opinions on the drama, and kindred dubieties. Or, in another description, the stamp of mental valet who unconsciously believes that culture is the state of being bored to death in a fashionable manner — that culture may be gained through a suppression, or at least an irrigation, of natural tastes and impulses.

The natural impulse of American taste is toward melodrama. The American wants in his music much blowing into brass and much pounding with sticks on stretched membrane; he wants in his art nudes rather than landscapes — and the nuder the better (he not long ago purchased, within the space of two months, three million copies of the bold hussy taking an autumnal sea bath); he wants dirtier scandals, cleaner plates, broader or narrower shoulders on his coats, handsomer restaurants and worse food, more governing bodies, more laws, more of everything, no matter what it is, than any other biped on the exterior of the globe. Moreover, in his absurd melodrama of mind, he cares not whether the thing be better or worse than the same thing elsewhere;

all he requires is that, whatever it is, it shall be more so. For the middle ground, the halfway, he has small use.

In the theatre the American taste (and I include therein the taste of the majority of its professional guides, the newspaper critics) will tolerate little that does not keep the loud pedal screwed to the floor. These guides, furthermore, will for the most part fail to grasp and will consequently withhold their complete endorsement from almost any play of any kind that sidesteps a possible melodramatic treatment of theme (however inappropriate). Please bear in mind that I speak here not of admitted melodrama; but of such *pâtisseries* as are known by the names of "philosophical drama," "psychological drama" and the like. Thus, to glance back over the records, we discover that where such primitive philosophical attempts as *The Terrible Meek* are hosannahed, such exquisite pieces of work as *Les Hanneçons* (*The Incubus*) are met with silence. *The Peter Grimms* and the *Cases of Becky and Witching Hours*, suavely perfumed for the native nostril with much psychological melodrama and correspondingly small psychologic sense, send the mob to the carpet in a spasm of eulogistic hysteria, while the cool-minded, less top-of-the-voiced and triply respectable *Pigeons* — assaying more genuine psychology to the ounce than all the rest grouped together — are left to play to the ushers.

There are numerous kinds of fever — double quotidian fever, fermentation fever, scarlet fever, aphthous fever, ileotyphus fever, thermic fever, malarial fever, levant fever, cyprus fever, carbuncular fever, hemogastric fever, idiopathic fever, yellow fever, typhomalarial fever, spirillum fever, cacatory fever, hay fever, exacerbating fever, enteromesenteric fever, melanuric fever, pythogenic fever, articular fever, dothienteric fever, hectic infantile fever, gastrohepatic fever, petechiel fever, noscomial fever, Chagres fever, gastrosplenic fever, eruptive articular fever, and the strange kind of fever which attacks dramatic reviewers whenever a Scotch play comes along and persuades them to rave over the “quaint charm” of Scotch characters.

Intrinsically, there is no more “quaint charm” to Scotch characters than there is to Zambesian characters or Bulgarian characters or German characters or Assyrian characters or any other such characters. Rather do Scotch characters appeal to us because they lack “quaint charm.” The Scotch are a race of unlovely visage, of ear-digging dialect, of harsh mien and tone. Certainly none of these attributes is either quaint or charming. Nor are they combined to be characterized as quaint and charming. The truth is, we of the theatre-attending crew are sick of “quaintness” and sick of “charm,” and gladden at the sight of stage figures devoid of these stereotyped and artificial qualities.

In the yesterdays of the native theatre, there were three dramatic themes that cuddled particularly close to the hearts of the great unwashed. In that era of theatrical sunrise, the pot-wallopper's mind was caressed, his emotions cajoled, his vertebræ agitated, through the exercise of the following formulas:

1. A baby girl deserted near a lighthouse, befriended by a gruff but kindly old sea captain given to the constant use of 'backy, and subsequently, to every one's great surprise, discovered to be of proud lineage and bulky estate.

2. A young man beloved of a young woman of high position; parental opposition to their union on the ground of the young man's inferior social caste; the *dénouement* bringing to light the astounding fact that the young man is really of titled birth, having been stolen from the Manor House by gypsies when a mere babe in arms.

3. A mortgage on the estates, held by a rascally cousin (who loves the heroine but who is spurned by her), is about to be foreclosed. This will deprive the heroine and her mother of a home and will cast them penniless upon the cold world. The hero, who also loves the heroine, seeks to baffle the cousin in his nefarious scheme. This the hero finally accomplishes (and wins the girl) by proving that the rascally cousin forged the codicil to the will.

Such were "those good old days!"

*

The hero in a melodrama is that character who displays spectacularly all the attributes of courage save forethought, intelligence and modesty.

The coward is that character who displays spectacularly all the attributes of forethought and intelligence save modesty — in the presence of the hero.

*

Star (musical comedy) — a heavenly body.

*

A labor play — one that makes the audience labor.

*

Is there one actress on the American stage who has not, at least once, had her photograph taken in at least one of the following positions:

1. Looking at a rose?
2. Reading a copy of the newspaper or magazine in which the picture subsequently was to be printed?
3. Looking wistfully out of a latticed window, holding onto the portière with one hand?
4. Driving an automobile, the name of the make of which happens somehow or other to be conspicuously observable?
5. An outdoor picture in which she is affectionately patting a horse on the nose?

*

THAT MIRROR AND THIS NATURE

That drama and the stage consistently hold the mirror up to life and nature, though a point contested by many, is proved beyond doubt by the fol-

lowing at once recognizable reflections glimpsed at random in the mirror in question:

1. It is customary in real life for persons never to consume more than ten minutes in the eating of their dinner. Also for persons always to quit the dinner at the middle course. (Never in the history of the stage's holding the mirror up et cetera has a meal progressed to the dessert.)

2. It is customary in real life for persons never to complete any sentence beginning with the words "You don't mean." Such sentences, without exception, are spoken in a hushed, tense interrogatory voice, thus: "You — don't — mean —?" It is also customary in real life for the person addressed never to make oral reply. The person addressed merely drops his eyes and nods his head. Under *no* circumstances, is the reply ever in the negative.

3. It is not customary in real life for men under any circumstance to face a grate-fire. Men invariably stand with their backs to grate-fires, feet wide apart, and hands clasped behind them.

4. It is the habit in real life of all intoxicated persons, when they essay to speak, to be given to an insistent and irrelevant use of the "sh" sound. Thus for instance, all drunks trying to repeat "It is the worst thing I ever saw," would without exception say "Itsh sh worsht shing I ever shaw."

5. In real life, one drink will cause any woman to become instantaneously intoxicated. All ladies, when intoxicated, giggle.

6. In real life, all small men who marry women larger than themselves are tremblingly afraid of their wives, who henpeck them unmercifully.

7. In real life the mistress of the house is of course always careful to see to it that the maid is younger and better-looking than herself — and wears thinner silk stockings.

8. In real life, men never die of any disease save heart failure and women of any disease save tuberculosis.

9. In real life, no Westerner ever wears evening clothes that fit him.

*

Our ears are constantly being assailed by the howl over the decline in the attendance upon our theatres. Where, cry the managers, the reason, the blame? And they answer themselves, do these self-persuasive spitzbuben, that it is all the fault of the increased ownership of automobiles, the prevalence of the dancing craze and, above everything, the moving pictures. Or they are answered by equally self-persuasive critics, that it is all *their* fault: that they, the managers, have built too many theatres, that they have taken out their orchestras, that they have sent inferior companies out of New York while advertising them to be the original companies, that they have been given to slipshod productions and to countless bad plays, that they have swindled the public in the matter of selling tickets and that, accordingly, the public has become weary and disgusted

and has remained away. Both sides are right. But they have overlooked one of the most important reasons for the decline in the size of audiences. I refer to the lack of attention the managers have bestowed on their drop-curtains. Consider! The average four act play announced to begin at 8:15 sharp rarely begins until 8:30. The average theatregoer is in his seat at 8:10. What has he to look at? The drop-curtain. Before the play starts, therefore, he has been looking at that drop-curtain for twenty minutes. Between the first and second acts comes an average intermission of twelve minutes. That makes his contemplation of the drop-curtain of a total to date of thirty-two minutes. The average intermission between the second and third acts is ten minutes and the same period elapses on the average between the third and fourth acts. The total contemplation is now fifty-two minutes. Add to this the unavoidable one and one-half minutes' vision of the drop-curtain after the play is over — it taking approximately that time for the aisle to clear — and you have a theatregoer who has had to spend some fifty-three and one-half minutes of the time he has been seeking amusement in the playhouse doing what? *Looking at the same deadly drab, unsightly, uninteresting, depressing piece of cloth!* Consider what happens to a married man who sees too much of his wife. To a man who looks experimentally into the grim monotony of a lark's mirror. To a man whose flat windows look

out into a dark and colorless court. May not it be the same with the theatregoer so far as the theatre is concerned? May he not be tired into disloyalty, hypnotized into a condition of somnolence, strain to get away — and stay away? Very probably. I, therefore, make this plea: Managers, look to your drop-curtains! Install half a dozen in place of the present, conventional, *one*. And see to it, if you would keep what audiences you still have left, that the curtains you buy be artistic, beautiful, restful, eye-delighting, soothing.

*

“Realism” — The theory that what we already have seen and already know must be more interesting to us than the things we have not yet seen and the things we do not yet know.

*

It is a curious circumstance that on the stage, no matter how many or of what nature or station their suitors, rich girls always fall in love as follows: 1. With an artist. 2. With a secretary. 3. With a bridge builder. 4. With a man whose brother owns a big sheep ranch in Rhodesia. 5. With an Englishman who several years before single-handed had quelled a mutiny in India. 6. With a lawyer. Of course, in real life, no one ever falls in love with a lawyer. In real life, rich girls always fall in love with a young pimply-faced stockbroker who waltzes divinely, with the clerk at the

summer hotel or with the chauffeur. Or, where they don't fall in love, they marry a young man in their own set.

*

A "new" farce, a French-British-American-West-Forty-Second-Street affair, was recently put on in a New York theatre. The plot of the "new" farce consisted of the following original ingredients:

- 2 Squirting seltzer siphons.
- 4 Stampings on other man's corn.
- 3 Lusty whacks on other man's back.
- 1 Falling screen revealing to wife husband having luncheon with a beauteous hussy.
- 3 Hells.
- 5 Damns.
- 2 Fainting women.
- 7 *Quasi-risqué* allusions to a bed.
- 1 Remark "Parlez vous Deutsch?"
- 1 Remark "Sprechen Sie Français?"
- 3 Thrown plates.
- 1 Remark upon use of patent pocket cigar lighter: "Gee, it worked!"
- 1 Surly old admiral.
- 1 Militant suffragette in black and white checked skirt.
- 1 English Johnny named Algernon.
- 1 Irascible old "colonel."
- 3 Mispronunciations of central character's name to provoke a laugh.
- 2 Excitable French waiters.
- 1 Ordering of everything on the menu with "AND a cup of coffee."

4 Repetitions of "SIT DOWN!!"

3 Attempts to sneak out of room on tiptoe with long strides.

1 Tapping forehead with remark "Nobody home."

2 Confusion of identities.

Once let a farce writer possess the valor to do a farce in which a bed is used for sleeping purposes and a siphon for drinking purposes — ah, but that day is as far off as the vaudeville day which will not reveal a sketch or dance or what not in which an artist goes to sleep and dreams that his painting of a beautiful woman has come to life!

*

I do not believe that it is well for a dramatic critic personally to know theatrical managers. I speak from experience. I am acquainted with two or three — and I know that this acquaintanceship has a plump tendency to influence my otherwise honest writings. I find that, knowing these gentlemen, coming into verbal contact with them, even now and again dropping the "Mr." in intimate greeting of them, I cannot for the life o' me, try as I will, in my criticisms of their endeavors refrain from dealing with them much more unfavorably than were they strangers to me.

*

Usher — A theatrical employe who takes the seat coupon from the theatre-goer, walks down the aisle and points out to the theatre-goer a seat which,

in the interesting part of the first act, is discovered by the usher to belong to some one else.

*

Why will our American one-tongued playwrights persist in causing their German characters to speak broken English thus: "The fräulein right is"? Inasmuch as, to make one illustration serve as a general text, the German is "Das Fräulein hat Recht," any German just learning to speak English would utter the words in like sequence and would not, as so many Americans believe from their joke pamphlets, invariably place the verb at the sentence's end.

*

"Sympathy" — A sensation of deep pity which an American theatrical audience is ordered to feel for all married women whose husbands cruelly neglect them between the hours of 11 A. M. and 4 P. M. in order to earn enough money to support them and for all additional married women whom the aforesaid husbands visit between the hours of 11 A. M. and 4 P. M. when *their* husbands have cruelly neglected them in order to earn enough money to support them and the unmarried women whom *they* visit between the hours of 11 A. M. and 4 P. M. In other words, a sensation of heart-moving compassion for everybody but men.

"Suspense" — A sensation of extreme nervous excitement which an American audience is ordered to feel for the future fate of two characters who,

the audience knows absolutely, will be found safely and happily in each other's arms at eleven o'clock.

"Surprise" — A sensation of amazement which an American audience is ordered to experience at those particular points in a play where the characters cease to act in a normal, natural manner and proceed to conduct themselves like the ends of chapters in a best seller.

*

To be a successful playwright for the American theatre, one must possess the iron-bound convictions that seduction is dramatic, that a sweet and amiable nature will conquer everything, that old people of either sex are interesting, that newspaper reporters never wear overcoats, that "there are two kinds of women — good women and bad women," that disappointment in love is a great tragedy, that a girl can tell the villain's intentions by the way he kisses her, that a girl who is "housewifey" and looks out for a man's comfort will inevitably win him away from the flightier girl who treats him with more or less disregard, that the country uplifts and the city corrupts, that money isn't everything in the world, that Cinderella is a greater piece of literature than *Les Misérables* and that a rich imagination consists merely in remembering what was in day before yesterday's newspaper.

*

Axioms of the American stage:

1. All heroes are sunburnt.

2. All heroes are loved by heroines because they are "so big, so clean, so strong."
3. All men over fifty have gray hair.
4. All bachelors are named either "Travers" or "young Winthrop."
5. All villains come from the East.
6. All Englishmen are dudes.
7. Every Spanish woman carries a rose between her teeth and a dagger in her garter.
8. All adventuresses are brunettes.
9. Wall Street men's wives never love them.
10. Family troubles always come to a head in the library.
11. All mothers wear black dresses.
12. All country girls are pure.

THE STANDING IN THE POPULARITY CONTEST FOR DRAMATIC LINES

VOTES

- 400,350 — "Let me pass!"
- 400,221 — "No — a thousand times no!"
- 400,220 — "... and then *you* came!"
- 400,216 — "I was a plaything and he cast me
aside."
- 400,212 — "I saw things through the eyes of a
child then, but I am a woman now."
- 400,211 — "You will *never, never* understand."
- 400,206 — "It is right you should know before you
judge me."
- 400,192 — "I understand, and I forgive you."
- 400,164 — "I'm not really — a — bad —
woman."
- 400,147 — "It was *because* I love you that I did
it!"
- 400,133 — "... I believed him."
- 400,129 — "After that, I knew no more un-
til —"
- 400,107 — "It's different with a man."
- 400,103 — "If only I could live my life over
again!"
- 400,101 — "I see it in your eyes, sweetheart, that
you are telling the truth."

- 399,980 — "I'll let nothing come between us — nothing!"
- 399,876 — "I tell you she is a good woman; I have asked her to be my wife."
- 399,624 — "Every fiber of my being cries out to you."
- 398,749 — "If you had any respect for me you could not act as you do."
- 398,221 — "What must you think of me?"
- 398,216 — "When I make up my mind to do a thing I usually do it!"
- 398,210 — "Come into my arms, dear — and forget."
- 397,628 — "You don't mean . . . !!"
- 386,971 — "The truth! I — want — the — TRUTH!"
- 379,854 — "I was a child in knowledge. I knew nothing of life, nothing of the world. And he was kind to me."
- 376,589 — "He's a MAN!"
- 368,238 — "Why *won't* you see! Why *won't* you understand!"
- 353,826 — "Go on! Go on!"
- 349,725 — "I'd like a few words with you — alone."
- 337,821 — "Ah, this puts the matter in a *new* light!"
- 322,767 — "Two lumps, thank you."
- 321,889 — "I am innocent! I swear to you, I am innocent!"

324 ANOTHER BOOK ON THE THEATRE

321,872 — "Let's sit down and talk it over quietly."

321,765 — "You've been thinking — what?"

321,722 — "We'll go away somewhere, dear, and make a fresh start."

321,548 — "What must you think of me!"

321,435 — "A gentleman to see you, sir."

321,434 — (with an air of resignation) "Show him in!"

321,348 — "Does it matter *where* I go — or *what* becomes of me?"

321,262 — "I don't know what you'll think of me, but —

320,989 — "Now you know *all!*"

320,892 — "I can endure this torment no longer! If you don't cease, I'll — I'll *scream!*"

320,721 — "The happiness of my whole life is staked on the result!"

320,655 — "Forgive me, dear, I wasn't quite myself. I didn't realize what I was saying. I'm a brute."

320,527 — "Nobody but ourselves need know what's happened."

319,823 — "May I smoke?"

319,500 — "But *you've* never loved as I have loved!"

318,928 — (tenderly) "Darling! My darling!!"

318,776 — "You wouldn't condemn me if you knew all!"

- 317,881 — "There! You've dragged the truth from me!"
- 317,123 — "I'll be waiting for you — when you return."
- 316,515 — "He loves me and believes in me!"
- 315,829 — "Remember that I have no hope or desire in this matter except to clear you in the eyes of the world."
- 315,192 — "He just couldn't act this way if he KNEW."

ON "ACTING IS AN ART"

1. *The Hero*.—Tall; straight shouldered; slim; hair somewhat curly if possible; blue serge suit; no jewelry; pipe; shoes not too highly polished; derby or (preferably) soft hat; fur overcoat under no circumstance.

2. *The Villain*.—Inclined to stoutness; must be brunette; black mustache will help; considerable jewelry; any necktie but a black one; clothes in the height of fashion; deep voice; highly polished shoes; must wear gloves (to be taken off and slapped against the leg); cane; either cigarettes or cigar (never pipe).

3. *The Heroine*.—Slim; blonde almost always preferable; must never dress in colors; must never look strong; small handkerchief; shoulders a bit stooped.

4. *The Adventuress*.—Tall; slim; must dress in

colors (never in white or black) ; must wear big hat ; liberal dose of jewelry ; brunette ; clothes must be of fashionable design ; clothes must be cut tight to show off figure.

5. *A Banker*.— Fat ; fur overcoat ; diamond ring ; top hat ; heavy gold chain across waistcoat ; black suit ; thick neck ; cigar ; chamois gloves usually ; highly polished cane ; gaiters over black Congress shoes ; in summer, crash suit and must always carry palm-leaf fan.

6. *A Débutante*.— Short ; slim ; blonde ; fashionable dress of soft white material ; ribbon or flower in hair ; must trip instead of walk and gurgle instead of talk.

7. *Spanish Girl*.— Dress of yellow and red ; skirt cut fairly short and tight around hips ; mantilla ; rose held in teeth ; fan.

8. *Faithful Negro Servant*.— Stoop shouldered ; old ; white hair ; must walk with one hand resting on lower part of back ; must have a quaver in voice.

9. *Butler*.— Tall ; about one hundred and seventy-five pounds ; must stand very erect ; must speak in slow and measured tones ; must draw mouth in a severe line.

10. *College Boy*.— Tan oxfords ; pancake or Panama hat with colored band ; wide trousers turned up at bottom ; clothes of extreme cut ; must use phrase " old man " frequently ; gold cigarette case ; many cigarettes (although pipe of " bulldog " variety may sometimes be substituted).

11. *Englishman*.—Tall; blonde; slender; clothes cut very tight; light walking stick; monocle; must stand with feet wide apart; must speak with a drawl; long cigarette holder; handkerchief in cuff; hat tilted far back on head; favorite phrase, "Oh, I say."

12. *Senator*.—Tall; rather stout; gray hair; Prince Albert coat; perfecto cigar; carries matches in silver matchbox; gold pencil; handkerchief of extra large size.

13. *Congressman*.—Tall; rather slim; Prince Albert coat; brown hair; panatela cigar; usually carries newspaper; soft hat with brim of fairly wide quality; look as much like Abraham Lincoln as possible.

14. *Housemaid*.—White cap; small white apron; black dress; skirt cut above ankles; medium height; brunette.

15. *Countess*.—Tall, dress with train whenever possible; lorgnette; aigrette; usually brown hair; very haughty.

16. *Burglar*.—Medium height; brown hair; slim; frayed sack suit; stooped shoulders; nervous look and walk; dark lantern; cap pulled over eyes; must need a shave.

17. *Lawyer*.—Fairly tall; slim; dressed in dark clothes; rimmed nose-glasses which he puts on and takes off intermittently; slightly bald; must say, "Yes, Madam" and "No, Madam"; must have suave manners.

18. *Southerner*.—Rule number one, must use

“suh” frequently; rule number two, must indicate his fondness for whiskey or juleps; rule number three, must look like Congressman type, with black string tie added; rule number four, must talk about “God’s country.”

ON VILLAINS

THE trouble with most of the villains in our native drama is that they are heroes. The curious, sentimentalized viewpoint of the general run of our theatrical scribes is such that a mountebank morality and philosophy urge themselves into their characters, with the result that the aforesaid characters frequently impress the separative spectator in an entirely different manner than their creators intended they should. Indeed, every now and then I discover that, by closing my eyes and considering the “villain” of the piece in the place of the “hero” and vice versa, with their speeches changed about, I am enabled to enjoy one of these plays and its thematic evolution intelligently and satisfactorily. A villain, by the world’s definition of him, is one whose actions are hostile to society in the light of the mental attitudes of that section of society in which he is in the immediate process of moving. Therefore when, as in the theatre, the section of society into which the villainous character is cast reveals no mental attitudes of any kind—save a blind and unsubstantiated attitude against the villain (who is called a

villain arbitrarily for the demands of the play) — the villain, being the only person in the crowd with an idea in his head, to me forthwith becomes the hero.

In our drama, any man is regarded as a villain who

1. Acts like a normal, healthy, sensible man in the presence of a woman, provided only the latter be an ass.

2. Says anything that diverges even remotely from what is accepted as the truth by nine-tenths of the population that patronizes the theatre.

3. Views his wife as a partner and companion in fortune and misfortune, instead of a partner and companion only in the former.

4. Wears good clothes.

5. Marries, or desires to marry, a rich girl for her money.

6. Is not liked by the hero.

7. Is not an American.

For the past six months, I have been working on a small book which will, when completed, prove definitively, I believe, that were the "hero" and "villain" characters in point turned about — each labeled with the other's name — the device would immeasurably improve the thematic values of four out of every five of our attempted serious American plays. Even in the case of so good a play as *The Easiest Way*, the villain is actually, in close analysis, found to be the hero. While in such absurdly inferior products as *The Lion and the Mouse*, the confusion in virtues is perfectly patent to any one

with half an eye or quarter an education in logic. The adjective "sympathetic," when attributed to one of the leading characters in the native drama, is generally applied in all seriousness by playwright, public and critic to the particular character in the cast who is most objectionable to the observing individual.

AT THE FOLIES MARIGNY, PARIS, 1914

THIS Revue de Marigny, following an established custom, is as thoroughly French as the French spoken by American actresses in the second act where they direct Marianne, the maid, forthwith to answer the door bell. The leading features of this typically Parisian revue are Mlle. Evélynne Thâw, dans le Boston et le One Step, les chansons Internâtionâl Râg, Vous Avez Your Mothér's Big Brôwn Eyès, Then Up La Rivière We Will Rôw, Rôw, Rôw and Aléxandèr's Ragtimè Orchestre, Les Jackson Girls, the joke about not thinking about le futur as this is mon birthday and je pense about le présent, and similar unmistakably Gallic things. In a word, this French revue (as every French revue in Paris in late years) is not one-half so "frenchy" as the American Ziegfeld Follies — which are not frenchy at all. The only really "frenchy" things I have observed on the American music show stage in the last five years have been Miss Lillian Lorraine's legs and Miss Elsie Janis's imitation of Gaby

Deslys. And the only really "frenchy" things I have observed on the French music show stage in the same space of time have been the "sister act" of a couple of American girls named Phillips at the Ambassadeurs and a dance by the American Florence Walton and Maurice at the Olympia. I have, accordingly, come to the conclusion that what people call "frenchy" is not frenchy at all, but really Americany. This accounts for the disappointment of us Americans when we seek the frenchy quality in the Paris revues. It is there, sure enough, but we don't recognize it because it is so familiarly and distinctly American.

ON ALFRED SUTRO

MR. ALFRED SUTRO, as a maker of plays, somehow generally gives me the impression of a young dramatic critic; a young dramatic critic, as has been noted, being usually inclined to throw his education around and to concern himself with being assiduously witty. Back of Sutro's work one feels always strain; back of Sutro's wit one feels frequently irrelevance. I know little about the gentleman save from a contemplation of his numerous plays. For all I know, he may be of soundly trained, well turned, smartly shined mind. He probably is. If he were not, in all probability his plays would ring truer, his humor trickle forth more spontaneously. It is one of the saddest of human paradoxes that the work of thor-

oughly educated men should have about it a surface tone of artificiality, of something forced and not naturally flowing, where the work of the spuriously trained has about it a becoming "naturalness" and mark of sincerity. I have often tried to figure the thing out—in vain. Why should, for instance, the plays of Shaw give persons the impression of being stiffly posed and painstakingly witty and the plays of such a comparatively inferior intelligence as Mr. Hubert Henry Davies (to pick the first at hand from many) seem perfectly the reverse? Probably education makes a man unduly self-conscious. And, after all, what makes a man more human than ignorance, and more "natural"? Why should Shaw's Bluntschli and Burgess, eliciting laughter with the celebrated theatrical trick of word reiteration (Arnold Bennett's pastime!) seem to many mere puppets as compared with the "humanity" of Davies' Mrs. Gorringer and the Jardines doing the same thing? Particularly as they must realize that, intrinsically, it is Davies' characters that are actually the puppeteer of the two sets. Why should the "Magic" of Chesterton (a work of considerable charm) impress its auditors in part as "a muddle of philosophy and infantile affectation" (I quote W. L. George) and any similarly to be classed play of Barrie's (assuredly a less wise soul) impress its auditors as "so human," "so natural"? I believe these latter are the usual tributes in the Barrie instance. Nor, I admit, undeserved tributes.

Here, in general, a subject for our essayists — if we had any.

ON FITCH AND WOMEN

A DRAMATIC critic knows exactly what women will do and exactly how they will act on each and every occasion. And woe be to the young playwright who doesn't know women as he, the critic, knows them, and who causes them to act differently than the critic knows absolutely they would act. For example, an experienced dramatic critic knows full well that every woman who has had a "past" will some day, just as sure as you are born, fall in love with a good man and regret that past. For example, the shrewd critic knows full well that every woman who has a wayward married sister will go to the male rascal's apartments and make it appear to sister's husband that it was she and not little sister who figured in the liaison. He has come lately to know, too, for an absolute certainty, that woman is the pursuer of the male and not *vice versa*; and he knows, just as sure as Granville Barker made little apples, that every woman who is embraced with undue fire by a man will struggle violently to free herself and, this accomplished, will shrink from the brute, bury her ashamed and tear-bespattered face in her arm and exclaim: "I realize *now* what you meant! Thank God, I realized it before it was *too late*! I hate you! I hate you!! I hate you!!!"

This comprehensive and authentic knowledge of women that comes to a dramatic critic through protracted experience with women (in plays) is and has been responsible for many curious things. For one, much of the reputation for "knowing women" that was enjoyed by the late Clyde Fitch. The dramatic critics told the country that Fitch "certainly knew women," and Fitch got his reputation. Although I have not the faintest desire to detract from this Fitch reputation for knowing women, it yet seems to me that, to some extent, it was not a case of Fitch knowing women so much as it was a case of the German playwrights, of whose writings Fitch was an assiduous reader, knowing women. In another phrasing, Fitch's more accurate dissections of the genus frau were, to a degree, the dissections that had previously been negotiated by Germans. An excursion into the popular German plays of the period of the Fitch activity in America will bring this home to you.

But my point is this: that poor Fitch got his reputation for knowing women from the dramatic critics, not from the most incisive and expert work he disclosed in that frou-frou, frau-frau direction — whether original with him or not — but from the petty chicaneries which (wise soul that he was) he knew he would have to make use of to convince a critical confraternity already steeped beyond redemption in the artificial scents of stock theatrical feminine psychology. And thus it came about, as

it always does seem to come about in American cases like this, that the simple, commonplace and perfectly obvious spectacle of a girl in a kimono doing up her hair with a bunch of hairpins stuck between her lips instead of in her hand was the thing that brought the critical hosannas about Fitch's head and caused to be overlooked his deeper and more significant female analyses — whether original with him or not, I again repeat, being an inconsequent factor in the argument.

ON BERNSTEIN

THE impression I receive from the plays of Henri Bernstein is of an ignorant man possessed of a spectacular vocabulary. This Bernstein is and ever has been a maestro of mere noise, a virtuoso of drawing-room thunders, a *primas* of scenic pishmince. A fourth or fifth-rater at best, he has been elevated to position in our commonwealth only because our critical peoples are such that they are unable to distinguish between being proficient in dramatic technique and being dramatic in proficient technique.

Bernstein's plays bear the same relation to the drama of modernity that a well-made empty house bears to a home — architecture without life, architecture unoccupied by human beings, a substantial dwelling with the family off on a vacation, a Fifth Avenue residence closed for the summer. We Americans are critically a nation in the constant state

of having just had three cocktails on an empty stomach. We are ever ready and eager to cheer the guesswork of the nearest press agent. We are the back-slappers of the cosmos, the have-a-drink conviviais of the world of art, the good fellows, the lodge brothers — and the come-ons. A mere press dispatch from London or Paris announcing a new Mars in the dramatic heavens is enough to set our critics to a wild waving of verbs over the deep significance of the discovery. We welcome all artists but artists. Ask ten Americans which is the better dramatist, Bernstein or Molnar, and the ten will tell you you surely must be joking. The same if you ask for a national comparison of the Irish Lady Gregory and George Birmingham, of the French Bataille and Donnay, of the German Kadelberg and Schmidt. The ten will guffaw — Birmingham a greater artist than the Lady; ha, ha; Donnay greater than Bataille, he, he; Schmidt greater than Kadelberg, ho, ho!

The last clamor from Bernstein is entitled *The Secret*, and save for a subtle examination into the character of a woman obsessed by a devastating and unreasoning jealousy, is the usual Act I, Third of July, Act II, Fourth of July, and Act III, Fifth of July — the usual obvious preparation for the explosion of the giant firecracker with the usual obvious explosion at the conventional moment and the usual obvious subsequent binding up of the wounds. The last act of the play, with its profuse peddling of

forgiveness on the combined heads of the mob after everybody has beaten everybody else to a pulp, is only another instance attesting to the fact that Bernstein's mind is nothing but a theatre in alcohol.

NATIONAL DRAMA

CAST

British

SIR RONALD TREVELYAN, BART.

LADY TREVELYAN

ARTHUR TREVELYAN (their adopted son)

NEVIL HILLARY, K. C., M. P.

THE REVEREND ALFRED GRAVESHORNE (curate of St. Stephens)

LADY ASHBY MONCRIEF.

DIANA CRAVENSHAW (clerk at Selfridge's)

PERKINS (butler to SIR RONALD)

ANDREWS (butler to LADY MONCRIEF)

MORSE (butler to HILLARY)

ROBERTS (servant to ARTHUR)

MUGGINS (servant to DIANA)

JENKINS (butler to PERKINS)

The scene is laid principally in London; the first and third acts at MR. HILLARY's flat in Grafton Street, the second at LADY MONCRIEF's house, "Willwolly," Sussex, in November of the following year.

CAST

French

CASIMIR ANDRAUX

HENRI (his son)

LUCIENNE (his daughter)

JACQUES POISETTE (a wealthy manufacturer)

MARCELLE POISETTE (his tubercular wife)

THE ABBÉ D'ARBOIS.

PIERRE VALOIS (an under secretary at the Academy)

LIEUTENANT WOLFGANG (a German spy)

The scene is laid principally in Paris; the first act in M. ANDRAUX's library, the second in MME. MARCELLE POISETTE's boudoir at midnight, the third in a small town near the German frontier.

CAST

American

JUDGE ROGER HAMBURTON (of the Supreme Court)

JUDSON TELFAIR (of TELFAIR & Co., brokers)

JAMES C. REYNOLDS (president of the First National Bank)

ARTHUR REYNOLDS (his son)

BAXTER (a warden)

DICK TRAVERS (a young lawyer)

SILENT SAM (stool pigeon)

WHITE, SMITH, O'BRIEN, MURPHY, CLANCY (police detectives)

MAGGIE REILLY (a stenographer at TELFAIR & Co's.)

MRS. REYNOLDS

MIRIAM REYNOLDS (her daughter)

ALICE ADDLEBY (MIRIAM's chum)

The scene is laid principally in New York at the present time; the first act at REYNOLDS' residence at No. 18 Gramercy Park West, the second in the brokerage offices of TELFAIR & Co., at No. 49 Wall Street, and the third in the warden's office at Sing Sing Prison.

CAST

Russian

MISKA VASALENAVITCH KLOOGLOSEVTLOFF (a retired professor)

ANNA VLADIMIROVNA KLOOGLOSEVTLOFF (his wife)

ANDRIEVNA, ELIZAVETA, MARINA, MARFA, VARVANA, BINGA, MASKA, GINKA, PAULINA (his daughters)

VOLGUTZ, SAVEL, KULIGIN, ZOWIE, BORIS, CONSTANTIN, ALEXIS, IVAN (his sons)

MICHAILEWSKY ALEXANDROVITCH DISTCHEFF (his wife's brother)

ASTROFF LEONIDIVITCH ZOWSKI (his first cousin)

MARINA KONSTANTINOVA PETRISHTSHEFF (his second cousin)

BIMBOFF (his third cousin)

BUTKEVITCH SPIFFVITCH KOKOKLINGHIN (his wife's step-uncle)

KUDRASH ILIA ASTERIKA (his grandfather)

DMITRI BINGHOFF KOROTSKOFF (his half-brother)

NASTASYA PAULOVITCHNA VITCH (his great-aunt)

LEONIDAS DOSTEVSKI KLISHAVITCH (his wife's brother-in-law)

FEODOR PAULOVITCH SONOFF (his doctor)

KLINGHOFF ABREZKOFFVITCH STATCHOFF (his wife's doctor)

PISHKIN, etc., DLTHIDOR, etc., BORAPATIKIN, etc. (other doctors)

GAMBOFF, PISH, KUDRASH, GREGORIVITCH (epileptics)

SERGIUS VODKAROFF (chief of police)

DIAPERA (an old nurse)

Barons, counts, princes, butlers, butlers' assistants, lack-

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eys, coachmen, cooks, valets, privy councillors, ministers, officers of police, secretaries, lawyers, etc., etc.

The entire action is laid in the drawing room of the country home of the KLOOGLOSEVTLOFF's, near Moscow.

CAST

Scandinavian

COUNTESS CHRISTINA

AUGUST (a garbage hauler)

The action passes in the coal cellar of a castle on St. John's Eve.

ON NEW SHAW OPINIONS

THE difference between the play characters of George Bernard Shaw and the play characters of many of his contemporaries — the latter insult the intelligence of their audience; the former insult the intelligence of one another. Example: The Philanderer. Inasmuch as in the words of the shrewd Mencken "every habitual writer now before the public, from William Archer and James Huneker to Vox Populi and An Old Subscriber, has had his say about Shaw," and inasmuch as The Philanderer has long ere this enjoyed its full share of the general sapience, I hesitate at this tardy day once more to set my own wits against the play. Let me confess, however, that whenever there happens to be a dearth of subjects to write about, I am always prepared to entertain the populace with a couple of new opinions

about Mr. Shaw and his works, as I have found that (contrary to the belief of my colleague, Mr. Burns Mantle) all one has to do to negotiate such brilliant critical opinions about the Irishman is to utilize the method sagaciously employed by Max Beerbohm. This method consists in thinking up something sort o' clever — something that has absolutely nothing to do with the topic in hand — and then connecting the remark with the subject under discussion through a quotation of the words of some wholly imaginary philosopher or critic. Thus, a new expression of opinion on *The Philanderer* might easily be brought about in the following manner:

A. (*the thinking up of the something irrelevant, but sort o' clever*)—Youth may be said to cease in an individual when he no longer enjoys walking in the rain.

B. (*the quotation of the wholly imaginary philosopher or critic*)—As Doctor Herman P. Eierfresser, the illustrious German commentator on the theatre and author of that admirable and penetrating work, *Überbrettl' und Unterbrettl'*, has observed: "To satirize a fad or current craze, playwrights almost invariably attempt to achieve their purpose through youthful characters. In these theatrical satires, the children are ever set satirically against their parents, never the parents satirically against their children. Why is this? Do older persons never succumb to fads and crazes? It would seem to me that a genuine satire of fads were

best to be accomplished through such characters as would be supposed already to have grown circumspect and wary as to fads with age."

C. (*the consequent new opinion about The Philanderer*)—Although Doctor Herman P. Eierfresser, the illustrious German commentator on the theatre and author of that admirable and penetrating work, *Überbrettl' und Unterbrettl'*, has observed that "to satirize a fad or current craze, playwrights almost invariably attempt to achieve their purpose through youthful characters, etc.," Mr. Shaw, in his satirical burlesque of the Ibsen mania which he calls *The Philanderer*, has generalized his satire by indicating, albeit indirectly, that, age or lack of age, youth may be said to cease in an individual only when he no longer enjoys walking in the rain. That Shaw's older characters, Cuthbertson and Craven, were still youthful by the terms of this definition, is made rather clear by the dramatist through assigning to Cuthbertson and Craven professions which emphasize the necessity of, and consequent liking for, an exposure to the elements, to-wit, the professions of dramatic critic and military man.

It's very simple.

*

MANAGERIAL THEATRICAL TRADITIONS

Tradition No. I—"The public hasn't never cared and don't never care about plays dealing with actors, stage life and the theatre!"

For Example

The Critic

The Show Shop

Fanny's First Play

Zaza

Peg Woffington

Adrienne Lecouvreur

Mistress Nell

Trelawney of the Wells

Tradition No. II —“ The public don't no longer care about plays with trial scenes! ”

For Example

On Trial

The Butterfly on the Wheel

Madame X

The Legend of Leonora

Common Clay

Young America

Tradition No. III —“ The public hasn't never and don't never care about the kinda plays that end with death.”

For Example

East Lynne

The Climbers

Camille

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Trilby

The Second Mrs. Tanqueray

Cyrano de Bergerac

Tradition No. IV —“ What’s the use of putting on good plays? The public won’t go to ’em and you’ll only lose money! ”

For Example

Androcles and the Lion

Candida

The Concert

Kindling

Cæsar and Cleopatra

Peter Pan

*

Granville Barker has been hailed by many of my critical colleagues as something of a genius merely because he has removed the footlights from his stage. Mind you, merely because he has removed the footlights from his stage! If it be just to name Mr. Barker a genius for this, may it not be more than just to name some of our producers of Broadway triple geniuses? They have removed from their stages not merely footlights, but acting and drama.

*

The Menu of Comedy

Tripe

Spaghetti

Limburger Cheese

Pumpernickel

Grape-nuts

Dill pickles

Lemons

Macaroni

Noodles
 Soused mackerel
 Chop Suey
 Hash
 Pork chops and gravy
 Wiener schnitzel
 Frankfurters
 Grape-juice
 Horse meat
 Squash
 and
 A small demi-tasse

AMERICAN MUSICAL COMEDY

AMERICAN musical comedy depends utterly and precisely upon twelve things, without the existence of which American musical comedy would be an impossibility. These twelve things are:

1. The moon.
2. Women's right legs.
3. Women's left legs.
4. The United States naval marines.
5. The bass drum.
6. Newark, New Jersey.
7. The idea that all Germans have big bellies, chin whiskers, speak unintelligible English and are engaged in the brewing business.
8. The idea that all Frenchmen are given, in moments of pleasurable excitement, to kissing all the men in the vicinity.
9. The idea that all Englishmen are tall, grotesquely thin and extremely witless.

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10. The idea that all Spaniards are relentlessly vindictive, carry daggers, dress to resemble a fruit salad and wear immovable scowls.

11. The idea that rich men invariably fall in love with poor girls

and

12. Gilt furniture.

*

BETTING ODDS ON AN ACTRESS'S AMBITION

100 to 1 — To appear in a play in which she outwits Richelieu.

99 to 1 — To appear in a rôle written for herself by herself.

90 to 1 — To appear in a play in which she implores and beseeches her lover not to think *that* of her!

80 to 1 — To appear in a play in which she excuses her sin because she was "just a mere child . . . not really a bad woman! . . . Oh, God, what have I done that I should be made to suffer so!"

70 to 1 — To appear in the following rôles at the following ages:

- I. At 40 in the rôle of a 28-year-old girl.
- II. At 45 in the rôle of a 25-year-old girl.
- III. At 50 in the rôle of a 21-year-old girl.
- IV. At 55 in the rôle of a 19-year-old girl.
- V. At 60 in the rôle of a 16-year-old girl.

65 to 1 — To appear in the genre of rôle associated with the name of Mrs. Leslie Carter, in other words, a rôle scented with spectacular cocotterie and pyrotechnic flapdoodle.

50 to 1 — To appear in a rôle that displays her as possessed of all the multifarious godly attributes.

40 to 1 — To appear in the rôle of a queen.

38 to 1 — To appear in the rôle of a princess.

35 to 1 — To appear in the rôle of a countess.

25 to 1 — To appear in a rôle that calls for numerous males to lay down their lives for her.

15 to 1 — To appear in a rôle that calls for several suitors to seek her hand in vain.

1 to 1,000,000 — To appear in the sort of rôle for which she is actually best suited.

EIGHT REASONS WHY THE MOVING PICTURES ARE HURTING THE REGULAR THEATRES

I. Because one may witness a moving picture play without being bored at regular twenty-minute intervals by ten minutes of irrelevant, stop-gap dialogue while the leading film is off stage changing into another Lucile gown.

II. Because the public is not compelled to read at least twice a week that this or that film is reported engaged to a prominent polo player.

III. Because a film never keeps the curtain wait-

ing just because the manager has declined to hire it a private car for its next week's jump from New York to Newark.

IV. Because a film does not wear its handkerchief in its cuff, nor its watch on a black silk ribbon stretched diagonally across its evening shirt, nor Brilliantine on its hair.

V. Because at no time during a moving picture play does the author of the play come out on the stage, in response to applause intended for the play alone, and make a speech.

VI. Because, as yet, the adapted French farce has not invaded the moving pictures.

VII. Because, at a moving picture play, one cannot hear the actors' pronunciations.

VIII. Because one may go to a moving picture play with the supreme comfort of knowing that even if the leading lady does try to imitate Ethel Barrymore's speaking voice, one can't hear her!

*

Vaudeville — French: from “va” (second person of imperative of verb “aller”) meaning “go”; “de” meaning “to”; and “vil” (adj.) meaning “base, vile, low.” Hence: to go to something low.

DEFINITIONS OF STAGE FURNITURE,
ETC.

Table — An object on which the hero pounds his fist when defying his wife or the villain.

Door — A place to hesitate at.

Grate — A place wherein a packet of old letters casting aspersions upon the heroine's character is burned in Act III.

Mantelpiece — An object whereon the hero rests his head when his wife or sweetheart is relating to him her "past."

Tea-table — An object utilized to pad out scenes until the play begins again.

Writing-desk — An object in the drawer of which a revolver is secreted.

Chair — (See "arm").

Arm — That part of a chair on which characters in a "society play" sit.

Piano — An object whereon the villain lays his hat and stick.

Bed — (See Sarcey's *Quarante Ans de Théâtre Français*).

Gas-Meter — An object to be displayed prominently when the poverty of the characters is desired to be emphasized.

Door-mat — An object over which a comic character trips.

Portières — Objects against which the leading lady poses.

Library — A room wherein everything transpires but reading.

Bedroom — A place in which the bachelor temporarily hides the leading lady.

Electric chandelier — An object that never lights up for at least two minutes after a character has turned on the switch.

Alcohol cigar-lighter — An object designed to indicate affluence.

Vase — An object designed to be smashed by the hero when angry.

*

Stage censor — one appointed by the public to keep from the public such plays as the public wants to see.

IMPRESSIONS OF DRAMATISTS

BARRIE — Chopin playing blind-man's-buff among the rose-bushes with Master Gabriel. Grandma reading George Moore to Little Willie. A tenor singing *Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep*. The sound of a zither in a circus sideshow.

SHAW — $1 + 1 = 3$; $3 = 0$. A drowning man coming up for the fourth time and screaming wildly for a glass of water. Nietzsche playing pinochle with Harry Von Tilzer.

ARNOLD BENNETT — Ladies' Day at the Players' Club. "Climbing the Alps with Burton Holmes."

A race to the death between two swans in Central Park. Reading through all of Webster's Dictionary to find the meaning of the word "zephyr."

STANLEY HOUGHTON — Havelock Ellis addressing a débutante dancing class. Firecrackers on Sunday. Gorky and Gaby Deslys playing Tobani's Hearts and Flowers on tin cans, with a whistling obligato by Brioux's niece. Mrs. Pankhurst in the harem.

GRANVILLE BARKER — Shaw at the age of six reading Man and Superman. Beef Extract and rosewater. A surgeon, after an operation for appendicitis, closes up the wound with pink court-plaster. Ivan Caryll playing the Nibelungen Ring on a mouth-organ.

AUGUSTUS THOMAS — $1 + 1 = 2$; $2 + 2 = 4$; $4 + 4 = 8$; $8 + 8 = 16$; $16 + 16 = 32$. Mothballs in the pine-woods.

BAYARD VEILLER — A dynamite explosion at Huyler's. Cries of "Help! Save Me!" from the bathtub. Revolvers and biscuit tortoni. Searchlights at high noon.

WEDEKIND — Strindberg kissing Elinor Glyn. Anna Held singing in the Chicago Stock Yards under the management of the late Mr. Elbert Hubbard. Alexis Carrel in the Eden Musée. A lullaby rendered fortissimo on cornets.

GEORGE BROADHURST — The exclamation point at the end of a Herbert Kaufman editorial. A

trombone in the next flat. A wedding announcement in 24-point type.

ALFRED SUTRO — White gloves cleaned with gasoline. The Easter fashion parade on Sixth Avenue. Apricot brandy and citronella.

*

If, as some argue, dramatic criticism is futile and should be abolished because two critics will frequently hold diametrically opposed opinions as to the same play, is it not equally true that the United States of America is futile and should be abolished because of Republicans and Democrats?

*

It is the annual lament of our theatrical managers, upon returning from abroad early each autumn and after having scoured America for available material, that it has been impossible for them to discover any so-called theatrical novelties. Why, pray? The feat should be perfectly simple. Let me suggest a few dramatic novelties which they have overlooked:

1. An "eternal triangle" play in which "the other man" is older and homelier than the husband.

2. A Wall Street play in which the husband, at the climax to the second act, does not hear a newsboy in the street below calling out the news that there has been a panic and that, consequently, he is ruined.

3. A play in which a young American and an Englishman figure and in which the Englishman gets the better of the young American.

4. A play during the action of which the heroine is called upon to play the piano and in which she does play it—instead of having it played off-stage synchronously with the movements of her fingers.

5. A labor play in which one act does not show the pitifully poverty-stricken home of one of the laborers at the factory or mill, with some member of his family dying of tuberculosis because of lack of proper nutrition.

6. A musical comedy without a reference to the Elks.

7. A musical comedy in which the German comedian has a normal German name like Schmidt, Kraus or Becker instead of Dingleblatz, Bierheister or Donnerwurst.

8. A respectable bachelor apartment.

9. A play in which a middle-aged bachelor with a ward does not finally marry the ward.

10. A play in which both New York and a little country town figure and in which New York is allowed, in the comparison, at least one good quality.

11. A military play in which the road over which the courier has ridden with the dispatches has not been dusty. Also a courier who isn't breathless when he arrives. Also such a play in which the enemy is not on the point of crossing something.

12. A court-room scene in which the leading woman doesn't faint.

*

Herewith I offer a scene from a version of Brieux's play, *Damaged Goods*, characteristically adapted for the tender sensibilities of our American audiences:

DOCTOR: Twenty cases identical with yours have been carefully observed — from the beginning to the end. Nineteen times — you hear, *nineteen times in twenty* — the woman caught a cold from her husband. You think that the danger is negligible; you think you have the right to make your wife take her chance, as you said, of being one of the exceptions. Very well; you shall know what you are doing. You shall know what sort of disease it is that your wife will contract without so much as having her leave asked. Take this book — it is my master's work — here, read for yourself. I have marked the passage. You won't read it? Then I will! (*He read passionately.*) "I have seen an unfortunate woman changed by this disease into a sneezing demon. The nose turned red, the eyes became bleary and watery and the —"

GEORGE: Stop! For pity's sake, stop!

DOCTOR: I shall not stop! I shall read to the end! I shall not refrain from doing right merely for fear of upsetting your nerves. (*He goes on.*) "And the speaking voice, once soft and musical, became thick and catarrhal — all its beauty completely destroyed." There, that will do! And you are willing to run the risk of inflicting that disease on a woman whom you say you love, though you cannot support even the description of it yourself? And pray, from

whom did this woman catch a cold? It is not I who say all this: it is the book. "From a man whose criminal folly was such that he was not afraid to enter into marriage, as was afterwards established, with marked grippe symptoms." What that man did is what you want to do!

THE PLOT OF A BELASCO PLAY ¹

JACQUES DUPONT is a poor artist who lives in an inn with real green shutters. During a Beautiful Belasco Sunlight Effect he and his wife, who is drinking real Vermouth from a glass bought at the Tiffany Studios, have a quarrel. An art-dealer enters through a real door. Jacques shows him one of his paintings, which he places in such a position that the audience may observe it is a real water-color, but the dealer refuses to buy it as a Gorgeous Belasco Twilight Effect begins to permeate the scene. From her cottage nearby, with a real and completely furnished room visible through the real glass window, the sympathetic little Maria observes poor Jacques' plight and seeks to aid him with some real money she has saved, but Jacques, as a Lovely Belasco Purple Evening Light Effect gets under way, declines. After Maria returns to her real cottage, she turns on a real gas jet and its light becomes plainly visible to the audience through the real window. Then Jacques removes his real coat and walks hopelessly toward the realistic sea on the

¹ The Temperamental Journey, in this case.

backdrop to end his troubles in suicide as a Superb Belasco Crimson Setting-Sun Effect streaks the horizon.

The second act passes in a studio in New York decorated with real paintings. Jacques, whom everybody believes dead, returns and is discovered by his friend Shepherd after the latter has pulled up the blinds gradually and permitted the studio to be suffused with a Magnificent Belasco Morning Sun-light Effect that is timed exactly to the raising of the blinds. Jacques goes into a room off-stage, in which the audience can observe real chairs when the door is opened, and takes a shower-bath, the sound of the flowing water being perfectly life-like. Despite his friend's urgings, Jacques determines to remain out of sight in the real room off-stage and keep up the deception.

In the last act, after the two beautiful Belasco lamps have been removed from the aisles by the ushers (an act which occurs three years later in a room in Shepherd's house that is furnished with a handsome real baby grand piano and real pictures and a real mantelpiece and real rugs), Jacques confronts his deceitful wife while through the real glass windows one may observe a Surpassing Belasco Day-light Effect. And, in the end, Jacques and the sympathetic Maria — as a real maid retires discreetly from the real room — indulge in a real kiss.

CURTAIN (*real*).

FROM THE COLLECTION OF A RUBBER-STAMP COLLECTOR

(The hero, turning wildly on his wife with a scream.)

"You're a low-down, lewd, bawdy jade — a lecherous, depraved, lickerish baggage — a foul, ruttish, loathsome hussy — an incestuous mopsy — a shameless harridan — a gross wench, a debauched trull, a riggish trollop, a lascivious Jezebel, a wanton Messalina, an obscene Aspasia, a dissolute, meretricious, impure, unclean Delilah!!!!"

(A few minutes later, when he has regained his breath.)

"I beg your pardon, sweetheart. I didn't mean what I said. I wasn't myself. I'm sorry. Forgive me."

CONVENTIONAL CONCEPTIONS AS TO HOW AN ACTRESS SHOULD EXPRESS THE EMOTIONS

1. Great Stress — Distending and contracting the upper portion of the corset a dozen times in quick succession.

2. Grief — Looking into the grate fire and biting the lower lip, meanwhile clutching a handkerchief in the right hand.

3. Joy — Crossing rapidly three times from left to right and right to left, periodically ejaculating:

“ Oh, I’m so happy! ”— Suzette, the French maid, the meanwhile standing up stage, looking on in a state of puzzled alarm and inquiring finally: “ Is ze madame not feeling well to-day? ”

4. Anxiety — Clutching the red velvet portière with the right hand and looking fixedly out of the window, the left hand being resolved into a fist and pressed against the left cheek.

5. Fear — Bending the stomach inward at the waistline, open hands pressed tightly against the breasts, mouth half open. This method may be varied by leaning against a table, fixing the gaze hard at the audience and saying, in a hushed voice, “ Oh, my Gawd! ”

6. Indifference — Elevating the eyebrows, shrugging the right shoulder, going over to the mantelpiece and carelessly sniffing the flowers in the vase.

7. Doubt — Sitting at a writing desk and biting the end of a penholder.

8. Anger — Jumping up from a chair and sweeping from the room, slamming the door with a bang.

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Another book on the theatre

